The response of the “non-vocational” disciplines towards increasing focus on employability in their curricula

A case study of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Oslo

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http://www.duo.uio.no/

Universitetet i Oslo
Abstract

This thesis examines the influence of increasing focus on employability in higher education on the response of the Universities and traditionally oriented programmes and faculties, humanities in particular. The research is carried out in the form of a case study, and has taken place at the Faculty of humanities at the University of Oslo. The attempts of the Faculty to contribute to students’ employability are revised and analyzed. Summarizing the reasons for increasing focus on employability in higher education, this particular case study accentuates employability as a response to practical application of knowledge and orientation on successful learning outcomes accentuated in HEIs to “prepare” students for the increasingly complicated challenges in society. Since there is no universally accepted strategy for introducing employability focus in higher education, this approach is argued to depend a lot on the combined initiatives of the Faculty and the academics and on the appropriately structured curriculum able to develop knowledgeable and highly-skilled graduates. Accordingly, changes in the curriculum are analyzed in relation to three domains of “knowledge, action and self” introduced by Barnett et al. (2001) and encountered constraints are examined. The differences between traditional and interdisciplinary programmes are analyzed in the context of programmes’ abilities towards implementing employability focus in their curricula. The challenges “non-vocational” disciplines encounter when increasing focus on employability are described on the example of the four selected master programmes: history (HM); english language (EL); media studies (MS); and culture, environment and sustainability (CES). The present research has concluded that employability focus does not substitute the traditional humanitarian knowledge, but becomes a “linking element” and a “translation device” between the higher education and the “world of work”. Even though employability is not the primary reason students decide to study humanities, both the faculty and the programme leaders consider it important to accentuate in the humanities curricula. However, due to the low level of involvement of academics in this process it still remains much the initiative of the Faculty and the University.

Keywords:
Employability, non-vocational disciplines, humanities, curriculum
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## Abbreviations:

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>CES</td>
<td>Culture, Environment and Sustainability Programme</td>
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<td>CC</td>
<td>Career Center</td>
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<td>EC</td>
<td>European Commission</td>
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<td>ECTS</td>
<td>European Credit Transfer System</td>
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<td>EHEA</td>
<td>European Higher Education Area</td>
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<td>EL</td>
<td>English Language Programme</td>
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<td>EQF</td>
<td>European Qualification Framework</td>
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<td>ERA</td>
<td>European Research Area</td>
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<td>ESU</td>
<td>European Student Union</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>FH</td>
<td>Faculty of Humanities</td>
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<td>HE</td>
<td>Higher Education</td>
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<td>HEI</td>
<td>Higher Educational Institution</td>
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<td>HM</td>
<td>History Programme</td>
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<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organization</td>
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<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<td>MS</td>
<td>Media Studies Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>SUM</td>
<td>The Centre for Development and Environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>The United Nations</td>
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"Graduate employability is more than being able to find a job immediately after graduation. Rather it is the individual’s ability to make an effective ongoing contribution to society, and leading a satisfying life thereafter. Such qualities are developed through the whole range of experiences which higher education offers." [Academy York Graduate Employability Circular 5, Oct 2003]

http://www.materials.ac.uk/employability/index.asp

“The role of higher education is to equip students with skills and attributes (knowledge, attitudes and behaviours) that individuals need in the workplace and that employers require, and to ensure that people have the opportunities to maintain or renew those skills and attributes throughout their working lives. At the end of a course, students will thus have an in-depth knowledge of their subject as well as generic employability skills”.


“Combining good teaching, good education and making students aware of the competencies they have been taught is the aim of the Faculty to increase the overall qualities of the programmes and the satisfaction of students of their learning outcomes”

(The quotation from the interview with the respondent from the Faculty of humanities at the University of Oslo).
1 Introduction

1.1 Employability

Following the Europe’s goal to become the “world’s leading knowledge economy” (Knight & Yorke, 2004a: 7) governments in many European countries have focused on the importance of strengthening the link between education and employment (Eggins, 1992: 116). Since governments are unable to guarantee stable employment in a competitive global environment (Brown et al., 2003: 107), universities’ roles have been revised in order to develop research-oriented education and to contribute to the national economy and human capital formation (Barr, 2003). Highly-skilled graduates, ready to enter the labour markets, have been regarded essential for national economic and social well-being. Moreover, the labour market has raised expectations in students as critical thinkers possessing high-level cognitive, meta-cognitive and social competences ready to engage in effective problem-solving, teamwork, communication and leadership (Cummings et al., 2008: 600). Consequently, European higher education policy “appeals to enhance employment prospects of students and to minimize the mismatch of the graduates with labour market demands” (COM 20061; EC 2009: 10). To achieve these agenda, competences and learning outcomes are accentuated in HEIs to prepare students for the increasingly complicated challenges in society (MoER, 2008-2009a2: 5) and to equip them with certain skills, abilities, personal characteristics and practical experiences (Knight & Yorke, 2004b). This process has increased focus on employability in a HE setting and has led to changes both in terms of the curricula and traditional structures of knowledge and disciplines.

The traditional structure of HEIs with its “traditional core disciplines” is argued to be under threat because of increased attention to employable skills and outcomes (Barnett, 2000: ix; Symes & McIntyre, 2000: 6). Universities are facing a challenge whether to contribute to students’ employability and thus align disciplinary curricula accordingly or to resist such opportunities, seeing in them the end of reflective and critical forms of knowledge (Barnett, 2000: x). Universities are becoming more flexible and are taking multitude of forms and

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engaging in a variety of relationships. Their roles have extended the traditional accumulation and dissemination of knowledge towards a wider curricular context and new forms of cooperation networks (Barnett, 2000; Boud & Symes, 2000: 24; Gibbons et al., 1994). In such an environment employability is but “one of a number of discourses that helps to frame university” (Symes, 2000: 42). It appears to be a kind of experiment at the moment, but it may grow into something larger in the future (Boud & Symes, 2000: 21).

Work and knowledge came to stand in a complex set of relationships to each other raising the question: how should HEIs respond to this challenge? There is no single clear strategy determined for introducing employability in HE as it highly depends on the policies of a particular university, the attitude of academics and the nature of taught disciplines themselves. However, increased focus on employability in HE environment has been reflected in a variety of research projects and literature as related to the following purposes:

1) Employability as the prime motivation of students in attending university and a reason for choosing a certain discipline to study (Kneale, 2008: 112);

2) Employability as one of the university performance indicators in response to the policy concerns (Harvey, 2000);

3) Employability as a new kind of teaching and learning in response to practical reorientation of knowledge (Knight & Yorke, 2004a);

4) Employability as a satisfaction regarding the outcomes of higher education (Boud & Symes, 2000).

Additionally, when entering the labour market the observed “skill deficit” in graduates has been attributed to an inappropriately focused, weakly directed and poorly delivered curriculum (Ross, 2000: 5-6). The question “what one can do through one’s knowledge” (Barnett, 2000: ix; Lees, 2002: 1) asked both by the students and society has accentuated the “use-value” of the HE curriculum. Teaching and learning have been required to prepare students for their future roles both in work and society. The specific skills students might develop through engaging with the “work-place pedagogy” are considered as enabling them

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to learn more effectively in all situations and sustaining the capacity of the lifelong learning (Chandramohan & Fallows, 2009: 84-85).

However, providing additional skills necessary for students to gain employment is not what causes the debates about employability in HEIs. Employability concerns “the very heart of what a university represents” (Boud & Symes, 2000: 27). It questions the possible co-existence of «cultivation of personality and utility of knowledge in a synthesized form of an adequate system of education» (Symes, 2000: 34). It brings inevitable challenges and multiple discussions, but at the same time accentuates certain positive benefits for HEIs. As for challenges, first of all, employability skills do not guarantee graduates’ chances of getting a job (Knight & Yoke, 2004b: 10; EC, 2009: 13). Besides educational training, employers also pay much attention to previous work experience, personality characteristics and motivation level while selecting their future employees (Einhorn, 1981). Secondly, the role of education as a “commodity” and competition from other vocational-oriented education providers may increase (Boud & Symes, 2000: 18-20; Barr, 2003: 328). Thirdly, it is costly in terms of time, efforts and supervisory arrangements (Boud & Symes, 2000: 28). Fourthly, this component is regarded as a short-term goal in response to governmental policies to fix immediate problems in HE due to fast-changing working environment and “limitation” of the acquired skills (Boud & Symes, 2000: 25-26). And finally, employability is assumed to be a threat to the traditional knowledge frameworks and a challenge to academic professionalism (Knight & Yorke, 2004b). Altogether these challenges question the purpose of HE: whether it is subject knowledge and understanding, or learning how to learn (Lees, 2002: 1) and practically apply that knowledge.

The benefits that increased focus on employability may bring both to the university and the students are also numerous. In spite of existing doubts as to the real influence of education on further employability of students, increased employability focus can improve graduates’ chances of getting a job (Knight & Yoke, 2004b: 10; EC, 2009: 13). If graduates possess different mixture of skills, competences and qualifications along with subject-specific knowledge, they can avoid being trapped in low-skilled jobs with poor career development prospects (EC, 2009: 3). Increased employability focus can influence students’ motivation, especially in those disciplines where curriculum and teaching methods are considered
mismatching real working life needs (MoER, 2005: 8). It may positively increase students and employers’ satisfaction of the HE outcomes and ensure greater employability of students in the long-term perspective due to awareness of the job-specific skills (Boud & Symes, 2000: 18-19; EC, 2009: 7)

Accordingly, employability in higher education is not only about students’ employment, but also about how higher education develops “critical, reflective and empowered learners” (Harvey, 1999: 13) who are able to complete their education and gain a “secure ground in working life” (MoER, 2008-2009a: 5). Aside from its practical goal, employability is considered beneficial for citizenship, lifelong learning and life of the graduates in general (Knight & Yorke, 2004b: 8). Taking into account all the benefits, employability focus can certainly reinforce rather than threaten traditional academic values, thus requiring consequent change within programmes of study, their curricula and teaching methods. Accordingly, many questions can be posed in this regard due to still prevailing challenges observed when introducing employability as one of practical components in HE curriculum. What is the role of HEIs in students’ employability? Do universities and the faculties try to increase focus on employability based on any of the four above-mentioned reasons? What initiatives do they undertake to adjust their programs to the changed nature of external expectations oriented on “employable results”? Can HEIs’ performance be judged by the employability results of the graduates, when the institutions have no control over the recruitment activities of employers? How should curriculum be structured to incorporate employability and whether is it the role of the curriculum at all? The present study has attempted to answer some of them in more details.

1.2 Research questions and rationale

The main purpose of this research is to analyze the response of the “non-vocational” master programmes at the Faculty of humanities towards increased requirements of accentuating focus on employability in their programmes’ curricula. Does the Faculty of humanities see the importance of employability focus in its curricula and what are the particular programme

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responses? What changes are occurring in programmes’ curricula accordingly? Is theoretical knowledge considered enough for the graduates to raise their employment prospects or do they additionally need specific career- and practically-oriented activities aimed at developing employability skills?

Reimer et al. (2008: 251) argue that “non-vocational” disciplines experience a high need for embedding employability in their curricula due to the preparation of students for a wider range of occupations and initial lesser value on the labour market. The “soft-pure” knowledge of the Humanities (Biglan, 1973) as “non-vocational disciplines” tends to experience the highest pressure in a modern and research-oriented university, where the “graduate tier is characterized as providing special protection for research and research-minded faculty members” (Clark, 1983: 191). The practical value of the humanities in this aspect remains disputable. Humanities are considered as not making “a clear and incontrovertible contribution towards the promotion of the utilitarian and instrumental reason of the modern industrial society” (Phamotse & Kissack, 2008). Additionally, they are also regarded as neither “lacking any wider social justification and neither needing nor deserving any significant support” (Becher, 2002).

Cultural consumption and production have become increasingly significant forms of economic activity, especially in societies where basic material needs have been largely satisfied (Gibbons et al., 1994). Research knowledge has expanded over the boundaries of traditional academia. Since many organizations nowadays use research in their activities and cooperate with HEIs, graduates experience the need to develop skills which have value on the labour market, and which can contribute to the application of research outcomes in the economy (Gilbert et al., 2004: 379). Compared to their peers in other disciplines, humanities graduates often experience higher unemployment after graduation (Egkins, 1992: 116). Consequently, focus on employability is especially accentuated as a “saviour for the humanities” helping them to sustain their status among other disciplines and to improve their graduates’ employment rates (Day, 2007).

The research problem, accordingly, is to investigate how increasing focus on employability in “non-vocational disciplines”, humanities in particular, influences changes in the humanities curricula as well as in the ways of teaching and learning at selected master programmes.

The following research questions are going to be explored in more details:
1. **What are the university and faculty strategies in relation to introducing employability in the curriculum?**

2. **What is the purpose of embedding employability in master programmes of «non-vocational» disciplines?**

3. **What changes are taking place towards increasing focus on employability at the Faculty of humanities and selected master programmes?**

4. **What are the strengths and weaknesses of employability-related practices for selected master programmes and what are the possible outcomes?**

To study employability issues in the humanities is important because these disciplines are often perceived as standing aside from the practical application of knowledge. Understanding their “practical side” will help all the “main stakeholders”: students to be more self-assured and aware in finding employment, academics to structure curricula and employers to distinguish what kind of knowledge and skills humanities graduates possess. Accordingly, **employability focus** in HE is recognized as the complex set of measures performed by universities through appropriately structured curriculum, policies and events with the goal to educate empowered learners supplied with a set of employability skills (Lee, 2001; Knight & Yorke, 2004a; McQuaid et al., 2005).

### 1.3 Research methods

The strategy of the present research is to conduct a case study that is both “particularistic” (Merriam, 1998), focusing on particular situation, and “exploratory” (Yin, 2003). The case study method has been selected for the present research to meet its main goal of serving as an “empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” (Merriam, 1998: 27). The object of the study, or phenomenon, is “employability” and the context is its intensification in HE environment, and particularly its influence on the changes in the curriculum and culture of the “non-vocational” disciplines like Humanities.

The University of Oslo (UiO) and the Faculty of humanities (FH) have been selected for the present case study due to its long history, traditional orientation and the size of the faculty. Another reason is the active involvement of the FH in improving the employability skills of their graduates since 2003. The UiO is the oldest university in Norway founded in 1811.
Initially, the Faculty of Philosophy was one of the four original faculties at the UiO. In 1861 this Faculty was divided into two new faculties, the Faculty of arts and the Faculty of mathematics and natural sciences. In January 2005 the Faculty was renamed into the Faculty of humanities. Nowadays, The Faculty of humanities is the largest faculty at the UiO. It has 8000 students, 800 bachelor and master candidates each year, 900 employees and 230 PhD candidates. The fields of study covered by the Faculty of humanities are varied and represent nearly 80 different subjects offered: European and Asian languages, linguistic and philological studies, history and culture of particular regions, aesthetic studies, communication and media studies, and a large number of various cultural, historical and philosophical subjects.

The empirical work is concentrated on the master programmes at the Faculty of humanities. It is aimed at investigating the influence of practical reorientation of knowledge and accentuation of employability skills of graduates and on the changes these programmes are experiencing in their curricula, methodology and culture. The main reasons for embedding employability in “non-vocational” disciplines are going to be analyzed, as well as the attitude of the academic staff of the humanities towards this reorganization. The four master programmes: history (HM), english language (EL), culture, environment and sustainability (CES), and media studies (MS) have been selected to compare the different attitude towards increased focus on employability in traditional and interdisciplinary humanities programmes. Particular attention has been drawn to master programmes due to their “dual orientation”, both on research and on other career opportunities, as well as more varied students’ experiences and background. All selected programmes are the two-year programmes through the Faculty of humanities. However, history and english language are more traditional disciplines, whereas, media studies and culture, environment and sustainability are interdisciplinary programmes, combining courses from the humanities and the social sciences. In addition, CES programme is officially part of the Faculty of humanities, but is offered by a separate research unit - the Centre for development and environment (SUM).

Documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews have been used to collect the data. The documentary analysis allows constructing an overview of employability-related policies and measures undertaken by the Faculty of humanities in regards to increased focus on employability. The related reports of the Ministry of Education and Research (No. 44, 2008-2009 & No. 14, 2008-2009) and UiO strategic plans (2005-2009; 2010-2020) have been
reviewed. Additionally, the curricula of selected master programmes and description of courses and their outcomes have been analyzed. The results of the policies performed by the FH are also described. The documents have been retrieved electronically from the websites of the Ministry of Education and Research of Norway (MoER), the UiO and the FH. The original copies of the Candidates and Employers Surveys (Arbeidsgiverundersøkelsen2006; Kandidatundersøkelsen 2008) provided by the career and employment coordinator have also been analyzed. The curricula of selected master programmes have been analyzed as to what elements of employability are already included, what is planned to be included and what is of lesser significance. The documentary analysis is important to supplement and to cross-validate the information gathered from the interviews. Additionally, it has provided guidelines in assisting the researcher with her inquiry during conducted interviews.

Furthermore, semi-structured personal interviews have been carried out with the heads of the selected master programmes, career and employment coordinator at the FH and a representative from the career center at UiO to obtain more specific data about the programmes and employability focus. The semi-structured interview method has been selected due to its “sufficient flexibility in approaching different respondents differently while still covering the same areas of data collection” (Noor, 2008). The interviews have been recorded to secure an accurate account of the conversations, further transcribed and analyzed. The analysis of the interviews was aimed at examining attitudes towards employability from the point of view of the people who are directly involved into its realization. It has also reviewed what kind of direct and indirect activities are introduced at the Faculty and programmes to increase focus on employability and who is responsible for their implementation. Altogether, seven people have been interviewed, five of which are representatives of selected study programmes - three programme leaders (HM; CES and MS), one professor (EL); and a student consultant (CES). Two more respondents have been additionally interviewed who could elaborate on the issue from a different perspective: career and employability coordinator at the Faculty of humanities and a career consultant from the UiO career center. Both the documentary analysis and the interviews help to analyze interrelations between different measures taken by UiO and FH and their influence on the structural, methodological and cultural changes of the programmes.
1.4 Limitations of the study

While performing case study research the researcher is only capable to capture a “freeze frame of participants’ life” in terms of negotiations, understandings and experiences related to a particular phenomenon (Smart, 2009: 116). But these factors do not remain stable over time.

All the interviews have been organized with the programme leaders of selected master programmes to obtain the most important points of view on employability. However, they might reveal only the superficial attitude towards it and be somehow biased due to the initially structured purpose (Merriam, 1998). Moreover, the documentary analysis may only indirectly represent the points of views of students, professors and employers. To obtain more profound information, the «triangulation method» of collecting multiple viewpoints would be an additional benefit to the present study. Thus, examining the attitude of students and professors at selected master programmes, their expectations and points of view could be a good source of additional “information providing the researcher with necessary cross-validation of the data” (Merriam, 1998). This could be done by mixing interview and data analysis methodologies with observations during attending classes of selected programmes and survey data sent to students and professors by electronic mail. But in this case the meaning of employability is likely to be understood differently and may receive conflicting interpretations.

Graduate employability still continues to be rather problematic as measuring it is even more difficult than defining (Cranmer, 2006: 173) due to the influence of the variety of factors, such as governmental and institutional policies and personal characteristics. However, the present study does not intend to research different factors influencing employability of the Humanities graduates, but rather to elaborate on the changes that have happened in the curricula of selected “non-vocational” master programmes and whether these changes have influenced the Humanitarian knowledge and traditional values. However, the limited amount of interviews and programmes’ selection does not fully represent the extensive picture of the whole Faculty of Humanities, rather a general idea has been constructed, which may serve as a foundation for future comparative studies in the same field or utilized for conducting a more extensive research.
1.5 Summary of the thesis

In the Introduction chapter, the researcher has elaborated on the general issue of employability, its importance in HE environment and the challenges faced by HEIs trying to increase focus on employability. The description of the research site and the research methods is presented. The importance of the present case study as to researching the influence of increased focus on employability in “non-vocational disciplines”, humanities in particular, is explained.

The second chapter summarizes prior research on employability and familiarizes the reader with the definitions of employability and its influencing factors. It also explains the peculiarity of employability focus in HE context, which is related particularly to increasing emphasis on developing employability skills of students. The overview of the reasons influencing the increased attention to employability in HE is provided. The analytical framework of the present study is based upon the principle of “performativity” recently observed in the university curriculum and described by Barnett et al. (2001) as an increased emphasis on efficiency, outputs and use-value emerged due to expanded relationship between HE and labour market (Barnett et al. 2001: 436). The results of this “performative shift” are argued to cause changes in all curricular domains of “knowledge, action and self” represented by disciplinary knowledge, self-beliefs of students and practical skills of students varying across subject areas. Accordingly, the corresponding changes observed in humanities curriculum are taken as a background for analyzing the present case study. The changes in the “knowledge domain” are particularly explained in accordance with Gibbons et al. (1994:3) theory of the knowledge produced in the context of application and its influence on the humanities. The changes in “action domain” are connected with the necessity to accentuate skills acquisition through the new ways of structuring curriculum and teaching students. And “self domain” is characterized by raising awareness of students of the practical application of their knowledge and skills. In conclusion, the influence of increased employability focus on the curricula of the “non-vocational” disciplines such as humanities is explained concerning practical reorientation of knowledge and increased focus on training skills and competences.

The third chapter describes external factors influencing the increased focus on employability in HEIs implicated by European, national, and institutional policies. The short overview of these policies is presented with an accent on Norwegian and UiO policies. The Project
undertaken by the Faculty of humanities to increase focus on employability of their graduates is described as well as the results of Employers and Candidates Surveys.

The detailed analysis of the interviews is presented in the fourth chapter, analyzing the responses of the interviewees in accordance with the research questions and analytical framework, described in the first and the second chapters. The reported curriculum changes are followed and described in detail, as well as a set of the challenges at the Humanities master programmes when they face the necessity to incorporate employability in their curriculum.

The conclusion summarizes the research findings and gives some recommendations. The role of the curriculum and academics is discussed when increasing focus on employability in HE context. The last chapter elaborates on the strengths and weaknesses discovered when embedding employability focus in humanities curricula and provides implication for further research in this area.
2 Prior research on employability in HE

In this chapter, the understanding of employability definition, its influencing factors and its role in higher education will be discussed as well as the analytical framework used for further analysis.

2.1 Definitions of employability through emerging concepts and frameworks

The term “employability” is often not clearly defined and is used in a number of contexts with reference to a range of meanings (Hillage and Pollard, 1998; McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005: 197). A straightforward dictionary definition describes “employability” as “the character or quality of being employable”. It mainly relates to those in work and seeking to improve or sustain their position in the labour market; in education; and out of work (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005). Employability has different meanings to different “stakeholders”. Individuals see it as assets and as a relationship with the single job or a class of jobs. Employers relate it to possession of certain skills and attributes that make individuals employable. Policy-makers regard it as an increase in potential of the national economy in competitive environment.

The term employability has been in use since the early twentieth century, however its meaning has changed over time (Moreau & Leathwood, 2006: 307). Starting 1920s, employability was associated with simplistic version differentiating “employed” and “unemployed”, that was more an “emergency distinction” than a labour market policy tool. Later in the 1950s-1960s, employability emphasized the distance between the individual characteristics and the demands of work in the labour market, concentrating more on the demand side. Later on, in the period of 1980s-1990s, those two previous versions of employability were criticized for being too static. Instead, they gave rise to the third version, more outcome-based oriented “labour market performance employability” used as a basic component of policy evaluation (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005: 201). At the same time, at the start of the 1990s, the question of “what employability is” reflected the beginning of the debate on the quality in HE (Harvey, 1999: 4).
The reformulation of “employment” into “employability” does not only mean a shift of terminology, but also a shift of discourses drawing on different explanatory frameworks of employment and different constructions of the worker. The main shift has occurred “from a systematic view of the labour market to a focus on the individuals and their qualities” (Moreau & Leathwood, 2007: 309). However, many researchers have concluded that employability cannot be limited either to the supply or demand side, but should be considered as “the outcome of a complex of different factors, located in the labour market, in schools, in the recruitment procedures of businesses and in the economic policies implemented by the government” (Kleinman & West, 1998: 174).

Hillage and Pollard (1998) developed the “employability framework” comprising the individual level and the context factors. The former one includes three key components: employability assets, deployment, and presentation; while the latter one describes virtually everything outside of the individual’s immediate control, such as local labour market demand and employers’ attitude. “Employability”, according to them, involves the ability to “gain initial employment, maintain employment and obtain new employment” (Hillage & Pollard, 1998: 2) under the influence of both factors. This framework has been criticized for being ideologically loaded, and not taking into account conditions of national and international labour markets that primarily determine employability rather than the capabilities of individuals (Knight & Yorke, 2003).

Brown et al. (2003) characterize employability as a “dual” concept. According to them, it exists in two dimensions—the relative and the absolute, which are sometimes confounded. The difference is that the first relative dimension concerns more with the government policies and labour market and represents a broader labour market perspective or “graduate employment” oriented on the employment rate and the need to invest in educating skilled work force. The second absolute dimension is seen as important to develop in HEIs and involves developing interrelationships between the universities, the labour market and employers, which is not simply about finding employment after graduation. This dimension represents a narrow competency perspective or “graduate employability”, which is a set of achievements derived through appropriately structured curriculum. As cited by Brown et al. (2003: 110), it relates to what Gellner (1983) termed as the production of “viable human beings” emphasized by increasing policy on graduate employability and importance of knowledge, skills and commitment of employees as a source of efficiency, innovation and
productivity. The “graduate employability” is about how individual’s employable skills and assets tie in with the needs of employers.

Employability in the work of Fugate et al. (2004: 19) in the “Heuristic model of employability” combines career identity, personal adaptability, and social and human capital considered important for active adaptability at work. This model of employability is regarded as especially useful for employees in transition to cope with job loss and job search, facilitating the realization of occupational opportunities (Fugate et al., 2004: 33). It has been further explored in the work of Hansen & Andersen (2009) analyzing employability of MBA graduates at BI Norwegian School of Management. Among the factors important for successful employment they identified psycho-social factors such as career identity, personal adaptability, social and human capital and self-perceived employability including people own perception of their own employability (Hansen & Andersen, 2009: 10-11). Moreover, occupational expertise, personal flexibility, awareness of organizational behaviour, and ability to keep the balance between the needs for specialization and de-specialization also seem to influence employment chances a lot (Hansen & Andersen, 2009: 7).

McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) have presented the evolution of different meanings of the employability concept and have further investigated its “broad” and “narrow” sides. They characterize employability as being influenced by a range of micro and macro external factors and individual factors involving a person’s employability skills and attributes. External factors are determined as labour market demand and its corresponding conditions: policies, legislation, employers’ attitude, assistance for finding employment, especially for disadvantaged job-seekers, and supply of appropriate jobs in the local economy (Evans et al., 1999). Personal factors, affecting individuals’ ability to get a job match, take into account contextual socioeconomic factors related to individuals’ social and household circumstances. These factors include caring responsibilities and other household circumstances, work culture and access to resources such as transportation, financial and social capital (McQuaid, 2006). All the factors together - individual, personal and external – have been combined in an “Employability framework” explaining the influence of both, “individual characteristics and circumstances and broader, external (social, institutional and economic) factors” (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005: 206) on individuals’ opportunities to be employed. Their framework is considered helpful in understanding the importance of employability by the local, national, and international labour market policies.
Pool and Sewell (2007) have introduced “A Key to Employability Model”, as a practical model aimed to explain the concept easily and to be used as a framework for working with students to develop their employability. The model’s components comprise the following elements: subject knowledge, understanding, generic skills, emotional intelligence, career development learning, reflection and evaluation, self-efficacy/self-condense/self-esteem. The first five elements result in constant reflection and evaluation and through self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-esteem as the crucial links lead towards employability as a successful outcome of higher education (Pool and Sewell, 2007: 280). The model is called “practical” as it is supposed to provide clarity of information about employability to students and possibly their parents, as well as to academics who can structure their curricula accordingly. It is also expected to be a valuable tool for knowledge transfer activities used to demonstrate to employers how the roles of HEIs and business can contribute to graduates’ employability with the benefits for both parties.

All these models do not simply regard employability as a transition from education to work, but represent a broader view, which takes into account different factors that influence gaining or changing employment in a particular labour market, or at a particular time (McQuiad & Lindsay, 2005). All these factors do not assure, but certainly influence an individual’s likelihood of gaining employment. People can be employable, but they may fail to find suitable jobs only because of certain market conditions (Brown et al., 2003: 122).

The awareness of these various factors relevant to obtaining a job is important to identify the real key barriers that prevent individuals from getting a job, whether it is a graduate, an employee, or an unemployed. The factors relevant to preparation for work depend more on the efforts taken by HEIs to increase their graduates’ employability (Lees, 2002: 2). Accordingly, a person's capability of gaining “the relative chances of acquiring and maintaining different kinds of employment” (Brown et al., 2003; Baker & Hansen, 2010: 63) can be summarized as depending on external, individual and educational factors with the latter ones represented by a set of person's knowledge, skills and attitudes gained at the result of an appropriately structured curriculum.
2.2 Increasing employability in HE: focus on skills

The broader frameworks of employability in many cases remain rather theoretical, as it is difficult to implement all of them into HE environment and to all disciplines. “Graduate employability” in a HE context is concerned more about “capabilities of individuals, or competencies, influencing students’ transition from higher education to work” (Smith et al., 2000: F385). These capabilities are interpreted as “employability skills” of students developed at university beyond the study content. The development of employability skills is viewed as a crucial step towards improving access to employment due to an increased attention towards “skills mismatch” as one of the main reasons of incompatibility between employers and job seekers (McQuaid, 2006: 408; Cranmer, 2006: 170). University policies have predominantly focused on developing employability skills of students relevant to the labour market needs. At the result of considerable debate over the meaning of “employability skills”, these skills have been determined as a set of personal attributes and competencies consisting of the following categories: essential attributes (basic social skills); basic transferable skills (literacy and numeracy); key transferable skills (problem-solving, interpersonal communication, adaptability, work process management, team-working skills); high-level transferable skills (self-management, commercial awareness); qualifications and educational attainments; work knowledge base and labour market attachment (McQuaid, 2006).

Bridges (1993: 45) has defined the term “transferable skills” as “application of skills across different social contexts”. For example, “teacher educators attempt to identify and teach something about class management, which can be applicable by student teachers in a variety of classroom situations” (Bridges, 1993: 46). Particularly, such transferable skills as interpersonal communication, management and collaborative group working skills have been viewed as necessary employability-related qualities to be developed in students (Bridges, 1993: 45; Spurgeon & O'Donnell, 2003: 150). Also, as suggested by Bridges, debates about skills raise the issue about the character and purpose of the curriculum.

Analysis of a wide range of research literature suggests that many HEIs have tried different attempts to develop students’ skills in their curriculum as a way to increase focus on employability. “Objectives-driven curriculum”, or “social-need led curriculum” claims abilities and capabilities as necessary to meet the needs of contemporary life (Ross, 2000:
“Problem-based learning” represented by developing teamwork, presentation skills, negotiation abilities and research skills, provides students with market related capabilities in addition to knowledge and discipline-related skills offered in the context of their general curricula (Savin-Baden, 2000). “Strategic learning” or “knowledge management” develops students’ knowledge about themselves as learners and their abilities to use strategies and tactics for acquiring, integrating, applying and thinking about new learning. Skills accentuation is considered as major part of employability supplementing disciplinary knowledge with additional generic skills and abilities (Cummings et al., 2008; Hager & Holland, 2006).

Knight and Yorke (2003, 2004) have studied extensively the development of skills in HE relevant to students’ future employment. They have designed an Employability model, which has further been used by a number of research-based scholarly works on employability. It has also been used by many European employability policy documents and organizations working with employability issues. This “new view” for employability explains specific achievements individuals need to possess to be more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations. The model interprets employability as constituting four broad and interrelated components: understanding, skills, efficacy beliefs (self-theories and personal qualities), and meta-cognition (self-awareness regarding the students’ learning), or the so-called USEM model (Knight and Yorke, 2003: 8). This model gives an idea that HE curriculum does not assure the graduates’ chances of getting a job, but may certainly improve them through achieving better learning outcomes (Knight & Yorke, 2004b: 10). There are four possible ways suggested to enhance students’ employability within HE curriculum: work experience; entrepreneurship modules; career advice; portfolios, profiles and records of achievement. However, their application is arguable, especially for master programmes, as they are understood as “transient events rather than the sustained learning engagements representing the complex learning achievements expected by employers of new graduates” (Knight & Yorke, 2003: 5).

Cranmer (2006: 260) in her “Expanded model of methods of delivering employability skills in HE curriculum” (Cranmer, 2006: 172), has analyzed the effectiveness of teaching employability skills performed through total embedding, explicit embedding, “bolt-on” modules and parallel development. She has divided the general approaches to skills
development in HE curricula into those “embedded” within degree courses and those offered to students in the form of “parallel” or “stand-alone” courses described in the Table below.

Table 1. Expanded model of methods of delivering employability skills in HE curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employability skills</th>
<th>Delivered by subject lecturers (mandatory)</th>
<th>Delivered by Careers and Employability Unit personnel (optional)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total embedding of employability skills</strong></td>
<td>Explicit embedding and integration</td>
<td>Parallel development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Explicit skills</strong></td>
<td>Bolt-on “professional skills”</td>
<td>Study skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Specific modules</strong></td>
<td>Specific modules aimed at enhancing study and generic skills</td>
<td>Developing writing, creative thinking, using web resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parallel development</strong></td>
<td>Study skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Study skills</strong></td>
<td>Specific modules aimed at enhancing generic skills, developed by Career and Employability Unit personnel, integrated into mainstream</td>
<td>Limited contextualisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Generic skills</strong></td>
<td>CV writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Specific modules</strong></td>
<td>Career guidance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bolt-on development</strong></td>
<td>Making effective job applications</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Loose skills without trace</strong></td>
<td>Visible skills</td>
<td>Bolt-on development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Skills disappear in context</strong></td>
<td>Skills in context</td>
<td>Limited contextualisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No explicit assessment</strong></td>
<td>Explicit assessment</td>
<td>Separate assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low impact on curriculum</strong></td>
<td>High impact on curriculum</td>
<td>Low impact on curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High impact on curriculum</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Cranmer, 2006: 172

Making skills visible and integrating them through such explicit methods as “bolt-on” professional and generic skills developing modules has made the highest impact on the curriculum. These activities have been performed either by lectures themselves or by career and employability personnel. These approaches have also required explicit assessment and much responsibility from the lecturing staff. This concept may serve as a model but it is not its primary purpose. It rather argues that giving preference to only one method cannot make students fully aware they are developing employability skills or can result in learning of skills being isolated from the mainstream of academic concerns (Cranmer, 2006: 170-71). Thus, the right balance is needed.

Despite the difficulties inherent with embedding employability in HE and produced mixed outcomes (Cranmer, 2006: 172), skills and attitudes altogether with knowledge become the main attributes employability focus depends on (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005: 197). Employability focus in a HE context is a combination of activities aimed at providing “a
clearer purpose for students learning, their greater appreciation of relationship between education and work, and more practice interwoven with the subject knowledge” (Dahlgren et al., 2007). Having a possibility to enhance their employability skills alongside with good teaching, clear goals and standards, definitely increases students’ satisfaction with their course of study. Accordingly, the proper education for employability is inherent into properly structured curriculum and other aspects such as teaching and assessment (Lees, 2002: 3). It is not a “crude attempt to replace the goals and curriculum of a liberal education by narrow vocational training, but a more subtle attempt to extend it in the interest of ensuring the practical competence of students” (Bridges, 1993: 44). Moreover, not only desire to satisfy students’ expectations but other varied reasons influence increased focus on employability in HE curriculum.

2.3 The reasons for increasing focus on employability in HE curriculum

Transferable or employable skills have taken more explicit form in HE context due to its attempt to keep up with external changes such as influence of globalization and internationalisation (Lore, 2006: 2), reconsideration of knowledge “as a prime factor for economic growth” and expansion of employment opportunities beyond the boundaries of “governmental employment and the professions alone” (Clark, 1983: 96). The demand for the HEIs to show the work relevant both to the needs of society and economy as well as increased performance accountability have resulted in their attempts of making sequence of knowledge and learning skills more useful to employment (Kogan, 1995: 241). HEIs, except for the most favoured and protected ones, have realized they need to be aware of the needs of the labour market and to insinuate these needs in the previously autonomous work of departments and faculties (Kogan, 1995: 241; Barnett & Coate, 2007: 37).

Based on the analysis of the previous research in this sphere, the reasons for increased focus on employability in HE curriculum can be categorized in accordance with the following interrelated purposes.

1) Employability as the prime motivation of students in attending university and a reason for choosing a certain discipline to study
Employability has become one of the attractive elements to introduce in HEIs as a part of contemporary curricula (Hager & Holland, 2006: 6). The attitude of students towards HE has changed due to their perception of themselves as “globally-competent citizens” (Hunter et al., 2006: 272) oriented on national and international labour markets. Extensive research performed on the topic has proved that monetary and non-monetary prosperity of individuals in their future depend on the level of their education and training. Investing in education, individuals aim at increasing benefits gained in terms of future higher wages and/or other social benefits (Becker, 1993: 17). Accordingly, students are argued to choose a particular program of study not only to study a particular subject in depth, but also to gain more employable outcomes and to enhance their employment prospects (Stewart & Knowles, 2000; Cox & King, 2006: 263). Thus, increasing employability focus in HE programmes is considered to help students increase their attractiveness to future employers “to pay back their debts” (Brown et al., 2003: 111). It is especially obvious in HE systems with the growing costs of education, where students select courses leading to secure employment and to maximize the returns they receive from their “investment” (Barnett & Coate, 2007: 37). At the same time, increasing focus on employability in less popular programmes can increase their attractiveness among potential students as well as reduce high drop-out rates (MoER, 2005: 8; Greenbank, 2006; Kneale, 2008: 112). However, the motivation of the students selecting humanities disciplines is primarily presupposed by the “hedonistic reasons” such as general interest of the subject and enjoyment of the discipline (Allan, 2006: 9). Only in the process of studying, they become interested how their degree will furnish them with the skills necessary for employment.

2) Employability as one of the university performance indicators in response to the policy concerns

The term “employment” has been replaced by policies with “employability” as a way of redefining the problem and making responsibility essentially local (Morrison, 2007:109). In this case, employability is regarded as a “fitness for purpose” (Knight & Yorke, 2004b: 10) increasingly expected by policies and “stakeholders” from local HEIs (Schomburg & Teichler, 2006). It is also aimed at reducing the skills mismatch and helping students gain employment in a flexible labour market (Houston, 2005). Employability of graduates is becoming one of the “performance indicators” (Barrie & Prosser, 2004: 244) widely used by the league tables for the recognition of HEIs and their programmes of study, especially in the
The number of graduates and their employability records are often considered as evaluative indicators when measuring universities accountability, allocating funds and resources and evaluating quality of university performance (COM, 2006: 208; Lindberg, 2007: 624, Mason et al., 2009: 6). Moreover, higher employability records of university graduates, especially if published officially, are considered helpful for HEIs to attract more students (Kogan, 1995: 243). However, it is argued, that employment rates of graduates can not serve as an indicator at all, first, because a HEI has no control over recruitment activities of employers; and second, because better reputation of some institutions among employers may initially presuppose favourable attitude to their graduates (Harvey, 1999: 10).

3) Employability as a new kind of teaching and learning in response to practical reorientation of knowledge

The changing nature of knowledge and the new ways of transmitting it, as well as intensified collaboration with the labour market, have brought certain changes to HE curriculum (Kogan, 1995: 241). The wider domains of knowledge application require introduction of more active approaches to teaching and learning, such as problem-based and work-based learning (Knight & Yorke, 2004b; Baker & Hensen, 2010). Universities have taken different approaches towards developing students’ employability skills, especially at the undergraduate level. Some universities have developed a detailed tabulation of skills expectations for each level of undergraduate provision (Fallows and Stevens, 2000); others have introduced innovative, student-centred, and problem-based courses across disciplines (Baker & Hensen, 2010). Employability has also been used as an empowering device to transfer subject knowledge and skills into situated and realistic work environments (Day, 2007). The curriculum has included a mix of dimensions and elements based on disciplinary developments and increased academic-employer discussions with a general shift towards “performativity” (Barnett, 2000: 259; Barnett et al., 2001). A student-centered style of education, which is individualized and flexible, has been designed with the goal to enhance the individuals’ opportunities for employment (Symes & McIntyre, 2000: 2). Such kind of curricular structure is regarded as motivating students towards good learning and enabling them to apply their knowledge and skills in a more “real-world” related environment. It is helping students to become critical lifelong learners who have the confidence to assess and develop their knowledge and use it practically (Harvey, 1999: 12). Accordingly, increased focus on employability in the
Curriculum has become at the same time a concern for academic values and the promotion of good learning enhancing the quality of learning, teaching and assessment (Knight & Yorke, 2004a).

4) Employability as a satisfactory outcome of higher education

The primary satisfaction regarding employability is the “job satisfaction” and “achieving career goals”, which are differently weighted for each individual (Harvey, 1999: 8). To succeed in the transition to work individuals should possess certain learning outcomes they have expectedly reached at the end of the programme. The knowledge and skills are both important since they further engage with the work environment and become a part of an ongoing and interactive learning process (Hager & Holland, 2006: 1). Good learning outcomes in HE do not exceptionally depend on instruction, task sequences and assessment practices. They are also achieved as a result of students’ approaches to learning in general, to studying in a domain and a general good learning environment. Orientation on learning outcomes in HE reflects a purpose to increase transparency and transferability of vocational and professional qualifications that has been recently emphasized since introduction of the European Qualification Framework (Brockman et al., 2008: 99). It has also become in its root connected with improving relationship between higher education and employment (Harvey, 1999). Although, increased attention to learning outcomes is doubtful in making a significant difference to individual learners (Cedefop, 2009: 2). More than that, the efforts of separate university departments to teaching, learning and assessment of employability skills still remain insufficiently measured in relation to their independent effect on graduate labour market outcomes (Cranmer, 2006).

Taking into account all above-mentioned reasons, increased focus on employability makes HEIs pay more attention to their performance and the ways of teaching and learning, providing students with necessary practical experience. Developing employability becomes a priority for many universities, but at the same time it is a big challenge, especially for traditionally oriented disciplines.

2.4 Curriculum changes caused by increased focus on employability
HEIs influence their students’ employability by nature of the disciplines, teaching and learning methods and willingness to market their graduates, apart from recognition, location and performance (Johnes, 1993: 184-187; Smith et al., 2000: F408). The focus on employability is argued to bring advantages to curricula, disciplines and overall quality of education (Hager & Holland, 2006: 7). Traditionally, curriculum has been structured to organize learning into bounded subjects and to bifurcate knowledge between theory and practice, defining education as “an accumulation of abstract understanding” (Ranson, 1992: 69). Increasing employability focus, disciplines are called to demonstrate their “use-value”, e.g. to be more practically-oriented and to prepare students who can feel more secure when acting in a super complex world (Barnett, 2000).

The curriculum remains one of the most important products HEIs offer to their customers. Besides students’ needs, it also takes into account requirements of the state, the labour market, and different institutions towards its more practical and external orientation (Barnett 2000: 262). As described by Barnett et al. (2001) the emphasis on making skills explicit and associating them with employability focus has revealed the obvious shift towards “performativity” in HE curricula. The authors argue this shift has happened as a result of the recent emphasis on “efficiency, outputs and use-value” and explain its different application across the subject areas. They also associate it with the increased relationship of HE with labour market, which has implied “doing, rather than knowing, and performance, rather than understanding” (Barnett et al., 2001: 436). “Knowing how, communication, interpersonal and transferable skills, problem-solving etc.” are becoming distinguishable in the newly emerged curriculum (Barnett et al., 2001: 437).

The major part of the newly emerged curriculum is still dominated by knowledge both as a source of academic identities and as a means of structuring it. However, the recent developments in the knowledge fields and their orientation on the use-value to society have intensified the additional components of the curriculum needed to exemplify practical application of knowledge and to acquire necessary skills. These components have also been intensified due to increased demand in producing critical and empowered learners required by national policy initiatives. All these three components, or domains, represented by “knowledge, action and self” are considered simultaneously influencing a student’s achievements in HE which therefore prepare students for their future employment. Though, they interact differently with each other across curricula and they may be integrated or held
separate depending on epistemological differences in the knowledge fields (Barnet et al., 2001: 438).

“Action domain” of the curriculum includes competences acquired through doing and intensifies skills acquisition using appropriate curriculum structure and teaching methods. Modules or units are injected into the curricula aimed at developing transferable skills of students. Students’ active participation is encouraged to stimulate their interest and acquisition of necessary skills (Martin, 2008: 305). The modes, forms and styles of presenting theoretical material diversify. They provide students with many kinds of analytical and research-based examples to make difficult areas more comprehensible. The lectures become more interactive; or take the form of “dialogues” when two lectures present their arguments or include more diversified presentation techniques (Martin, 2008: 316).

“Self-domain” curriculum component develops an educational identity in relation to the subject areas and is instilled in the curriculum to teach students how to become more reflective, self-reliable, knowledgeable, skilled and aware of different opportunities. Developing reflexive and self-confident students is important for the universities in the short and long-term perspective (Kneale, 2008: 99). It gives students possibility to be aware of what skills, competencies and personal achievements they actually possess at the result of their learning and how they can use them to plan further professional development in different spheres, including research (Lees, 2002: 3).

The “knowledge domain” refers to those components of the curriculum that are based on discipline-specific competences and those aspects of teaching and learning that develop subject specialists. In spite of its stable position, knowledge has recently undergone some inevitable transformations. The changes have taken three main forms. As investigated by Barnett et al. (2001: 440), new shapes; new topics; new techniques and new forms of realization have emerged. The “new shape of knowledge” has required responsiveness to extramural interests; combination of the scientific and more communicative and self-reflective knowledge; and a more dynamic structure of the disciplines. In a way it has reflected the overall change towards practical reorientation of knowledge characterized by increased expansion of output; transdisciplinarity; commercialization or the social contextualization of knowledge; heterogeneity of knowledge production and the massification of research (Gibbons et al., 1994). “The new topics” within the knowledge fields have emerged reflecting their external orientation and as a response to rapid change and
obsolescence, especially obvious in science and technology (Barnett et al., 2001: 441). These new knowledge characteristics also reflect orientation on the changes in the global economy. “The new techniques and new forms of realization” reflect “technologization” of knowledge and increased fuzziness and transparency across knowledge fields, not only in their practices but also in their theoretical base (Barnett et al., 2001: 441). Permeability of the frontiers between the university and the wider world has also increased the number of networks, events and potential sites, which can additionally contribute employability skills development.

In spite of the obvious transformations, the major challenge for HEIs is still how to consolidate all these three domains in one curriculum: how to connect existing knowledge with the examples from the “outside world”, how to determine their practical utility for students and how to structure the curriculum accordingly. Aimed at increasing the marketability of graduates, curriculum in any discipline is becoming a “matter of the formation of students supplied with knowledge altogether with technological and economic competencies valued for the global market” (Barnett et al., 2001: 445). Since each discipline is characterized by particular culture, knowledge base, relationships to the world of work and relationships between research and teaching (Barnett, 2000: 256), the ways to bring employability focus into the curriculum depend a lot on the nature of a discipline.

2.5 Increasing focus on employability in “non-vocational” disciplines: the response of the humanities

The humanities subjects may resist such a “performativity shift” described above, but they are not unaltered (Barnett et al., 2001: 436). The humanities are initially characterized as broadly oriented both in terms of knowledge application and further employment opportunities and are accordingly categorized as “non-vocational” disciplines. They still preserve traditional values perceived as “intellectual representation” (Gibbons et al., 1994: 91) and “the pinnacle of scholarly prestige” (Becher & Trowler, 2001). Correspondingly, these traditional intellectual values represented by the Humanities as “non-vocational” disciplines are regarded as being more altered by current economic influences and threatened by intensification of the relationships with the world of work (Day, 2007: 61).
The practical value of “non-vocational” disciplines, such as humanities, remains disputable in a modern university (Lore, 2006). On the one hand, they are characterized by Gilbert et al. (2004: 379) as “less valued by the labour market”, but at the same time labour market opportunities have widened the choices for the humanities graduates to apply their initially varied set of skills. Though humanities graduates possess characteristics valued by employers, their curriculum is not primarily designed in response to employment needs (De Weert, 1995). According to Silver and Brennan’s (1988) typology course-employment relationships, Humanities are placed into the end of this typology, described by an “open market and non-relevant education” due to their inadequate structure of the courses in relation to subsequent employment (De Weert, 1995). However, these disciplines usually seem to be less enthusiastic about it (Stoecker, 1993; Becher et al., 2002; Kwok, 2004). It is difficult for the Humanities as “soft-pure fields” (Biglan, 1973) to embed employability into their curricula, since their knowledge is mainly produced within the university environment. When encountered with the necessity to be tested in the workplace, this type of knowledge is threatened by being judged as “too vulnerable and non-viable” (Boud and Symes, 2001: 25). According to Barnett’s curriculum classification, the humanities are described as heavily weighted by the knowledge domain. There is more integration with the self domain, while the action domain responsible for skills acquisition valued by employers, is held apart and represents just a small component in the curriculum (Barnett et al., 2001: 439). The interaction between curriculum components in the humanities is represented in the Figure below.

Figure 1. Curriculum: arts and humanities schema.

Source: R. Barnett et al., 2001: 440
The increased focus on employability has caused humanities to introduce certain changes in their curricula and to make attempts to integrate the “action domain” more into their curricula and hence to make it more visible to students. Accordingly, the other two domains have also introduced appropriate changes. First of all, the “knowledge domain” has taken more practical orientation in accordance with increased external changes and requirements:

1. **The structure of the knowledge field is taking new shape**

Becher (1994: 154) has described humanities as “soft-pure” fields historically characterized by “individualistic and pluralistic culture”, which are loosely structured; have low publication rate and are more person-oriented. Recently, the humanities alongside with other disciplines have started incorporating “characteristics of science and technology” (Gibbons et al., 1994). It has resulted in a transformation of philosophic nature of these disciplines towards more analytic and research-oriented. Transdisciplinarity has become a rule resulting in growing “fuzziness of disciplinary boundaries” (Gibbons et al., 1994). Cooperation with other disciplines, departments, institutions and organizations has been encouraged to produce new knowledge, develop innovative approaches to teaching and increase research opportunities. The number of outputs such as published books, research papers, and works of arts has expanded also due to “staff promoting criteria and academic recognition” (Becher, 1994: 157). The rise of the so-called “cultural mass” or transmitters such as magazines, journals, broadcast media, theatres, museums, exhibitions etc. has increased the future employment destinations for Humanities graduates and caused the influence on the nature of knowledge as well (Gibbons et al., 1994).

2. **New topics emerge within knowledge fields**

Since the last century the humanities have started to mimic, borrow or adapt methods and attitudes of the social sciences, or even natural sciences (Gibbons et al., 1994: 105). New clusters of knowledge have emerged resulting in new disciplines combining existing courses and also appearing as a response to a social demand. The humanities have become more open and responsive to “extramural interests” (Gibbons et al., 1994) reflecting principles of internationalization and globalization. One of the trends has become to supplement courses with “marketable options, both in the title and in the structure” (De Weert, 1995: 39).

3. **New techniques and new forms of realization emerge within knowledge fields**
The abilities to work with new technologies, to cope with varied information and to possess transferrable skills have also penetrated into the Humanities. Computer literacy and software application have integrated into the epistemological structure of these disciplines both in teaching techniques and in learning (Barnett et al., 2001: 441). The broadening of courses, more flexibility and more differentiation are observed (De Weert, 1995: 39). The fuzziness of the knowledge fields is apparent through the emergence of interdisciplinary issues of sociology and politics. However, the variability in the epistemic contents of their curricula depends much on staff’s own professional interests (Barnett et al., 2001: 441).

Concerning “self domain”, humanities graduates generally perceive themselves possessing a broad range of skills such as independent and creative thinking, abilities to work with people and to communicate. These skills are considered as comparative advantage of humanities graduates on the labour market (Eggins, 1992). Even though direct exposure to the world of work is much less common in History, the history degree is largely suitable for different types of employment because of the students’ capacity taught to be critical thinkers (Barnett et al., 2001: 445). Language departments until recently advised their students to study languages because of the highly marketable nature of their degree (De Weert, 1995: 30). Recognition of the importance of employability focus and informing students of how and why their employability skills are being developed, will offer them far more chances of success in the future (Baker & Henson, 2010: 64).

The Figure 2 presents the “action domain” as standing apart from the regular curriculum of the Humanities, however, this varies across programmes of study. Students have generally positive attitude towards “applied” learning as an opportunity to develop their subject skills in practice, and as a “product” to show prospective employers at the end (Day, 2007: 65). This reason has caused considerable changes in the content and the organization of the courses, mainly in their methodology and structure (De Weert, 1995: 35). Seminars and colloquia have supplemented lectures as helpful tools for the students to become more familiar with the “real world practice”, to take part in discussions, to find out about additional literature and to practice such skills as oral communication, presentations, and teamwork (Martin, 2008: 317). However, in spite of these efforts, the “action” domain is still hard to link to the traditional humanitarian knowledge, thus the accent on skills prevails.

The influence of increased focus on employability in HE on the employment results of graduates, especially those of the humanities, still remains doubtful. In spite of their expanded
role in modern society, the humanities try to preserve their traditional values. It is a key dilemma encountered by them, whether to accentuate employability as a “saviour” (Day, 2007: 61) and develop “new kinds of students”, or to neglect it due to the more traditional orientation of knowledge and leave it to students themselves. Should “utilitarian outcomes” be more visible to students and emphasized through networking and practical application of knowledge (Symes, 2000: 36)? This question interrelates with a bigger, yet unresolved, debate about the purpose of university education (Hager & Holland, 2006: 4) questioning how employability elements can be better introduced in education and whether employability should at all depend on the efforts of a HEI (Harvey, 1999: 11).

To sum up the overview of the previous research works about employability, the individual’s employability is said to depend on a range of factors: external, personal and educational. The latter ones are emphasized as a preparation for work developing employability skills of graduates. Orientation of governmental, and correspondingly institutional policies on increasing employability of graduates has made HEIs think of the possible ways to incorporate employability focus in the work of their departments. “They have to demonstrate their relevance to the wider world and to be redesigned to address its challenges” (Barnett & Coate, 2007: 41). However, their attitude to employability focus differs according to the modes of teaching and learning (Johnes, 1993; Smith et al., 2000; Kwok, 2004) and capacities of interaction and hybridization with the world of work. Employability is argued to be embedded in any academic subject in HE without compromising the core academic freedom (Lees, 2002: 6). But the issue is still about how to increase focus on employability so that the academic content is not lost, which is especially relevant for the Humanities (Lees, 2002). How to structure the domains of the curriculum such as “knowledge, action and self” to provide students with a body of knowledge and with abilities to apply it analytically and what kind of approaches to teaching and learning should go beyond it (Harvey, 1999:12)?
3 Policy developments towards increased focus on employability in HE

3.1 European frameworks addressing employability focus in HE

To ensure people get meaningful jobs, the capacities available both in individuals and in the local systems had to be strengthened (Morrison, 2007). In many countries, since the 1980s, the pressure has been increasing on HE to contribute directly to national economic regeneration and growth (Harvey, 2000: 4). The role of HEIs as the main local supplier of the highly skilled labour force has influenced governmental policies to distinguish skilled labour as one of the factors contributing to a more inclusive and competitive labour market, reducing inflation and increasing productivity. Taking this into account, HEIs are expected to be more responsive to external needs in their study provisions and activities (Schomburg & Teichler, 2006).

The concept of “employability” has taken a central place in the labour market and education policies in the European Union. Primarily, it was connected with reducing the gap in individual skills-sets and attributes seen as the major cause of unemployment (McQuaid et al., 2005: 191). Many supranational institutions such as OECD, IMF, UN, ILO addressed employability to promote active engagement for the varied social groups in employment opportunities, improve quality and productivity at work and increase the employability of the unemployed across international boundaries (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005: 197; Symes & McIntyre, 2000: 7). Some strategies, such as UN’s Youth Employment Network, pronounced the importance of “reviewing and re-orienting education, vocational training and labour market policies to facilitate the school to work transition and to give young people a head start in working life” (UN, 2001, p. 4 as cited in McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005: 198). Employability has also emerged in European documents and policies as a supplementing force helping Europe to reach the goal of becoming “the world’s leading knowledge economy by 2010” (Symes & McIntyre, 2000: 6).
Employability formed one of the four original pillars of the European Employment Strategy, which emerged as a defining theme at the Extraordinary European Council on Employment (the so-called Jobs Summit) in Luxembourg in November 1997 (CEC, 1999). The two following major “frameworks” - The Bologna Declaration (1999) and The Lisbon Strategy (2000) – have introduced changes in the system of European HE and guided the European response to globalization in HE (Van der Wende, 2009: 320). They have also addressed employability focus as a part of their strategies. Enhancing academic quality and employability of graduates are the two most frequently mentioned driving forces behind the Bologna Declaration (Reichert & Tauch, 2003: 5). The goals of the Bologna Declaration alongside with establishing a system of credits, promoting mobility and quality assurance, accentuate:

“....promotion of the necessary European dimensions in higher education, particularly with regards to curricular development, inter-institutional co-operation, mobility schemes and integrated programmes of study, training and research ” (The Bologna Declaration of 19 June 1999).

Implementing Bologna goals gave rise to the establishment of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). “Employability has been one of the main goals to be achieved with the EHEA creation from the very start” (The official Bologna Process website 2007-2010: Employability). EHEA was particularly aimed at reforming curriculum and degree structures for easier recognition on the European labour market and at the same time increasing international competitiveness and attractiveness of European HE (van der Wende, 2009: 320). The new degree structure and credit transfer based system (ECTS) have brought more flexibility and differentiation in terms of levels of education and facilitated “mobility of highly-skilled people” (Hartmann, 2008: 80). It made “learning outcomes for a given qualification more transparent and transferable showing how the various qualifications in the HE system interact and how learners can move between qualifications”\(^5\). In response to this, other activities have expanded: professional doctorates and masters; work-based degrees; developing such practical skills as communication and critical reasoning; rise of double degrees; interdisciplinary programmes; establishment of closer alliances with industry and business (Symes, 2000: 38-40). Additionally, the introduction of the Diploma Supplement has been considered necessary both for institutions and employers to add transparency and


flexibility of the HE degree systems and to make full use of it for fostering employability (ESU, 2010). All this have intensified better employment opportunities for the HE graduates.

Increasing employment rates and strengthening social cohesion by 2010 are the most important goals of the Lisbon Strategy, launched in 2000. This Strategy gave rise to some key reforms in EU countries and expected the Member States to invest in education and training, and to conduct an active policy for employment. It also considered HE as the key area for strengthening the knowledge-based economy (Hartmann, 2008: 63). The universities were required to introduce changes into their systems of education and research by strengthening links with the business world. It was influenced by a new “production paradigm” dependent on continuous innovation, research and development and intensified practical application of knowledge (Symes & McIntyre, 2000: 1). HEIs had to adapt to more diverse student qualifications and labour-market needs (Reichert, 2009) considering skills and knowledge, acquired both in educational and work settings, as central parameters for employability of their graduates.

Consequently, multiple follow-up strategies, national action plans and frameworks have emerged emphasizing development of skills necessary for graduates’ employability. In 2005, the Bologna process had no official goals or principles on employability. Only in 2007 the agreement on the need for data collection on employability was identified as a necessary action line to be included in the report (ESU, 2010). The Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) set up a working group after the Ministerial Meeting in London in May 2007 to provide a report for the next 2009 conference on how to improve employability of students in each of the three cycles. In 2008 the progress report concluded that:

“Employers, both in public and private sector, and universities need to be encouraged to co-operate more to ensure that the skills that they feel graduates need are reflected in higher education provision. This dialogue needs to take place across a wide range of different areas, including curriculum design... There should be an increased focus on providing work placements as part of courses; on encouraging students to take jobs related to their course of study where appropriate and which are compatible with their study work-load; and towards developing more programmes of part-time study to cater for those people already in the workplace who wish to update their skills as part of the lifelong learning agenda...”


Accordingly, the reforms aimed at increasing the quality and competence standards for HEIs (Salvesen, 2002: 190) have been intensified. They pronounce the importance of the outcomes of HE, such as knowledge, skills and aptitudes “as a major force in the EU’s innovation, productivity and competitiveness” (EC, 2007: 1). Facilitating initiative, entrepreneurship and lifelong learning education are also considered as supporting factors for employability (EQF, 2008; EC 2008-2010: 15). These orientations on reforming education systems, upgrading skills and raising the employment level of the university graduates have become strategic priorities for the EU and European HEIs (EC, 2009: 3-4). Responding to this challenge, ninety-one percent of the Heads of European HEIs regard the employability of their graduates to be a very important issue as well as an important criterion in curricular reform (ESU, 2010). However, there are still doubts on the assumption how employability focus can be effectively developed within classrooms (Cranmer, 2006: 172).

3.2 Employability focus addressed by Norwegian policies

Creation of an adequate supply of well-educated persons for the future is the focus both for the HE and for the government, since a knowledge-intensive production has been considered depending on a highly-educated workforce (Fägerlind & Strömqvist, 2004: 20). Regardless of this, in Norway there have been no policies aimed specifically at enhancing employability of university graduates, which may be related to low unemployment in the country overall (Lore, 2006: 6) and for university graduates specifically.

Striving for the recognition of its educational and research potential in Europe and in other countries, Norway has also been following overall European strategies (van der Wende, 2009: 332). Norway is an associate member of the EU through the European Economic Area agreement of 1994 (EEA) and a full member of EU’s research, education and culture programmes (Smeby & Trondal, 2005: 451). Besides being obliged to implement all EU legislation relevant to the functioning of the internal market, Norway contributes financially to social and economic cohesion in the EU/EEA and is integrated in European policy and economy. Norway has been recognized as a part of the European labour market, providing

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both Norwegian and international students with the opportunity to be prepared for the expanded labour market opportunities (Dahl, 2003).

The issue of competences in the workplace was first addressed by The Competence Reform Report No. 42 to the Storting (1997-98) aimed at “increasing competences in the workplace, in society and by the individual”. A good basic education was considered the basis for further learning and a foundation for a long-term rise in competence. This Report emphasized that “the public education system must play a central role in providing training which meets the need for competence in the workplace”. However, the observed increase in the number of students at Norwegian HEIs, their unsatisfactory progression rates and high drop-outs required the overall evaluation of the HE system in Norway. It was especially relevant for “the long-term liberally organized university studies in humanities and social sciences” (OECD, 1992: 274). National HE policies and the Bologna Process came together in Norwegian Quality Reform considered as response to the Bologna process. Norway was one of the first European countries to implement the two-cycle degree structure in its HEIs following the Bologna recommendations (Lore, 2006: 6). The implementation of the Quality Reform has influenced the structural changes, introducing bachelor and master degrees, and new grading and credit point systems according to the ECTS model. It has also addressed “more systematic quality assurance, more ambitious internationalisation targets, and more result-based system of financial support to students”\(^8\). All HEIs, with a few exceptions, have responded to the demands for transparency and transferability of the courses and degrees (Fägerlind & Strömqvist, 2004: 210). They also work on improving the cooperation with business and employment and increasing the application of research results in business (MoER, 2005: 8).

Why was Norway, a non-EU member, striving to be at the forefront of European HE? The main goal as mentioned by Fägerlind & Strömqvist (2004: 211) is to be the best in the educational market and to be at the forefront academically in both teaching and research. Accordingly, such terms as quality, efficiency and effectiveness, have preoccupied political agendas and have given rise to the introduction of more practical orientation in HE (Stensaker, 2004: 59). MoER Report No. 14 (2008–2009b:12) on “Internationalisation of Education in Norway” regards a qualitative education relevant to today’s working life and

\(^8\) The Quality Reform in higher education: Norway, from 2001 to ongoing: 
http://www.kslll.net/PoliciesAndAchievements/ExampleDetails.cfm?id=17
society needs as “an opportunity for Norwegian universities and university colleges to become more attractive to cooperation and internationalization”. Employability has been considered as allowing greater flexibility and better orientation on individual needs of students (MoER, 2005: 8).

The recent Report on “Education Strategy” (MoER, 2008-2009a) describes “employability strategy as one of the pillars in the red-green coalition government”.

“The government in Norway considers it important that the entire adult population should contribute to society through various activities and that as many as possible do so through employment... The competencies and skills of the labour force should be created with the goal of achieving a better match with the requirements of the labour market” (MoER, 2008-2009a: 5).

The main goals of this Strategy are to offer varied and more practical primary and secondary education; concentrate on competence development and lifelong learning; increase the quality of teaching in HEIs, especially research-based teaching, and improve the cooperation with working life. The HEIs are expected to adapt teaching and research affiliations to the learning outcomes they want their students to have. Work-related relevance is considered as a criterion for assessing the institutions’ quality assurance system for education (MoER, 2008-2009a: 13). “Education, knowledge and skills altogether are regarded as contributing to inclusion at the workplace”9. Students are also expected to use both generic and practical skills to be more experimental and entrepreneurial in the future, which is also indirectly connected with employability.

The recent Action Plan on “Entrepreneurship in Education and Training” for 2009-2014 mentions that The National Curriculum for Knowledge Promotion (“Kunnskapsløftet”) expects students to acquire competences linked to entrepreneurship. The Directorate of Education and Training allocates NOK 2 mill approximately each year starting 2006 for funding university colleges and universities with teacher education programmes that focus on developing courses where training in entrepreneurship is integrated in the teacher education programme or by offering supplementary education courses, in-service training schemes, experience exchanges or other types of competence development connection.

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9 Opening Speech at the informal meeting of OECD Ministers of Education by Minister of Education Bård Vegar Solhjell
All the above-mentioned documents have emerged quite recently. It means that the orientation on increasing focus on employability in Norwegian HE is a burgeoning issue, and in most cases accentuated in relation with other processes, but it will have a longer-term impact.

3.3 Institutional responses to increased focus on employability: strategies of the University of Oslo

The structure of HEIs shifted “away from classical centre-periphery models towards network and market models”, with universities considered as “the engines of this process” (Smeby & Trondal, 2005: 450). Producing well-prepared graduates for the job market, multiplying research publications and being involved in technology transfer became possible solutions for HEIs to regain public legitimacy, credibility and trust (Sporn, 2003: 117-118). Graduates are expected to possess not only a solid basis of knowledge, but also to be ready to learn and develop, bring new ideas and contribute to the business development and future economic growth (CBI, 2009: 2).

Nordic universities have traditionally followed the “Prussian model of higher education”, and have been expected to serve as producers of the elite. Only those with a masters’ degree could enter the higher levels of civil service. HE is considered by Norwegian society as the need for cultural and intellectual refinement, and its graduates as elite sector of society educated in national and international culture (Fägerlind & Strömqvist, 2004: 191). Thus, in Norway, more than 50% of graduates traditionally enter the public service (Lore, 2006: 8). However, the labour market opportunities for HE graduates have changed towards broader perspectives in Norway as well. First of all, traditional employment of university graduates within the public sector has changed in the 1990s due to public sector cutbacks resulting in fewer openings there. Consequently, graduates from universities had to look for job opportunities in other spheres including private businesses. Secondly, some disciplinary differences have become more obvious resulting in slightly lower employment rate six months after leaving higher education for candidates from social sciences, humanities, law and sciences than for

candidates in psychology, business studies, and health care studies (Stensaker, 2004: 56). Graduates in the Humanities have been generally reported as experiencing difficulties in finding relevant employment after graduation (Kandidatundersøkelsen, 2005: 22).

Influenced by the multiple changes in the globalized world, the employers’ expectations towards contemporary graduates have also changed. The knowledge of the subject still remains very important. However, employers look for other values and skills such as analytical skills, social skills, management skills, communications skills, the ability to learn, foreign language skills (mainly English), presentation skills, lifelong learning strategies, team work, ability to work under pressure, time management, abilities to see new opportunities and perspectives, written communication, and networking skills (Arbeidsgiverundersøkelsen, 2006; Lore, 2006: 9-10). They are less concerned about specific employment-related knowledge since this can be taught in employer training programmes. Employers favour more what the applicant has done before, during, and after studies.

In response to these changes, the universities and their faculties have decided to strengthen internal policies and programmes. Learning outcomes and the competencies of graduates play a central role to reach the main goal of education as mentioned in the University of Oslo (UiO) Strategic Plan for 2005-2009. It has required to clarify the goals of the study programmes and to structure teaching accordingly with them.

“…UiO will organise its educational activities so that they provide broad academic competence for professions requiring a high level of knowledge; lay a solid foundation for further learning and development and develop the individual’s ability to transfer knowledge and insight into problem-solving…” (UiO Strategic Plan for 2005-2009: 9).

The cooperation with the outside world as an additional educational component has also been necessary to strengthen:

“UiO will more actively and systematically compile and utilise ideas and input from outside the university – from working life, alumni and other educational institutions recognised for their high quality of education. UiO will provide students with more knowledge about, and contact with the professional sectors for which they are being educated (UiO Strategic Plan 2005-2009: 9).

The decision of the University to choose the profile of a research-oriented university has given all faculties the research focus, even the faculties with the weaker research traditions. On the one hand, research orientation is connected with the need for stability, predictability,
and maintenance of traditions (Fägerlind & Strömqvist, 2004: 209), but on the other hand it is considered as a preparation for the necessary research-oriented professions, especially at the master level, within “the country’s densest concentration of knowledge-intensive undertakings” (Consultation document for UiO’s Strategy 2010–2020: 8). Currently, UiO is the largest university in Norway comprising 6,000 employees and 25,000 students. It occupies a leading national position and a promising international standing, and is located in the capital city. For the new decade UiO has high ambitions for its long-term development. It plans to increase the quality of its research and the research training in general; to inspire students involving them in active research environments; and to educate graduates who are attractive to national and international labour markets (Consultation document for UiO’s Strategy 2010–2020). The central question of the new University strategy for 2010-2020 is “how much better UiO can be to become an outstanding European research-oriented university” (UiO Seminar, 2010). Will strengthening employability focus become one of the pillars able to increase the quality of education and the future profiles of its graduates?

Aligning their internal policies in accordance with the quality requirements, skill orientation and the University strategies made Faculties think about employability of their graduates alongside with teaching, learning and research issues. Raising students’ awareness of different competencies they possess and enhancing their employment opportunities have become important tasks for the Faculty of Humanities due to quite large number of students and its important position at the UiO. The Faculty has initiated a project aimed at increasing “employability focus” in its programmes running from 2003 to 2007. Aside from many different activities, this project carried out the employers’ survey (Arbeidsgiverundersøkelsen, 2006) of those employers who had employed humanities graduates. The overall survey results revealed that employers were generally satisfied with the knowledge of the humanities graduates and 90% of them would like to employ other graduates from this Faculty in the future. In general, employers valued the most the ability to acquire new knowledge and professional qualifications in humanities graduates (Arbeidsgiverundersøkelsen, 2006: 9/61). They were generally satisfied with the graduates’ skills, especially analytical and writing abilities; though they wished that the graduates could additionally possess more time management skills, teamwork, networking and ability to see new opportunities. The weakest points were considered to be the candidates' ability to process numbers and statistics. The most popular disciplines mentioned by the employers were English and Media, as 55% of the respondents would like to hire candidates with these degrees. After that, Norwegian
language/linguistics, other European languages and History were ranked high (Arbeidsgiverundersøkelsen, 2006: 11/61).

The results of the survey recommended that the Faculty had to strengthen subject areas and students’ weak points in order to improve the Faculty’s reputation among employers. These recommendations have been taken into account when preparing the new Faculty strategic plans. The following actions have been undertaken: introducing academic counselling program for students, organization of seminars for departments and programs and providing information about professional opportunities for students. In 2007, the project disseminated the results of the employers’ survey to the departments and encouraged professional development of the academic staff. Many regular activities both on the Faculty, departments and programme levels have been introduced. There was even some funding provided for academic staff for research initiatives and implementation of employability component in their curriculum. Moreover, the position of the career and employability coordinator managing all the employability related events at the Faculty level has been introduced.

In autumn 2008, UiO conducted a candidates’ survey (Kandidatundersøkelsen 2008) of the four faculties: the Faculty of theology (TF), the Faculty of mathematics and natural sciences (MatNat), the Faculty of humanities (HF) and the Faculty of social sciences (SV). The survey covered approximately 5,200 candidates from bachelor's, master's and PhD levels who completed their degree during the period from 1 January 2005 to 30 December 2007. The survey was carried out by Rambøll Management. The most important results of the survey have revealed that 84.7% of graduates are in jobs. As for the HF, 40.4% of graduates are employed, and 33.9% are temporary employed. Many graduates (51.5%) work for the public sector, while others (41.6%) find their first job in the private sector. The biggest number of the graduates from the HF is still employed in teaching and in the research areas (35.9%). The major tasks students of the HF usually perform at work are analysis/methods (27%), R&D and laboratory work (25%), consulting (20%), education/training (19%) and administrative work (19%). Education and administrative jobs are still mainly in the public sector, while R&D and consulting is provided more by the private sector. Eight out of ten candidates usually find a suitable job, but the graduates of the HF are rated lower in this matter. In spite of the bigger percentage of graduates satisfied with their jobs in relation to their requirements, slightly over 30% are not satisfied. Many students (93.3%) have had working experience after the age of 18 working part-time until the completion of their degrees. It means they are
already somehow familiar with the “world of work”, however, it is not known whether their part-time working experience in many cases not related to their professional studies help them find relevant jobs in the future. 88.7% of graduates usually find jobs within six months after graduation and there are only 11.3% who remain unemployed. Analyzing their abilities after graduation, students name the highest subjects knowledge and methodology and communication and dissemination skills. Leadership abilities and working knowledge are ranked the lowest. The higher education has been considered as giving positive influence on the students’ future employment in case their programmes of study provide them with the opportunity to get jobs that match their expectations; give them competencies that work requires and demands; supply them with good analytical and communication skills, industry and business understanding and emphasize collaboration with social partners. Master’s thesis has also been considered as having an edge for the graduate students to find a suitable job as well as a focus on career planning while studying (Accumulated from Kandidatundersøkelsen 2008).

The results of the “Employability project” performed by the FH were mainly considered as recommendations and neither as requirements nor as even some kind of “pressure” for the departments and programmes to implement employability in their curricula. It recommended developing modules or programmes with stronger employability-related focus, however it turned out to be applicable more in some disciplines rather than in others, and depended much more on the initiatives of the academic staff themselves.

Generally, employability depends on the country policies and the local conditions of the labour market. It has found the most extensive application in the UK, where government policy to enhance employability of graduates comprises part of a wider strategy to extend the skill base (Harvey, 2000). To sum up the major policies and projects in Norway, it is possible to come up with the conclusion that employability is not a serious problem for the graduates, even for the Humanities graduates. This idea has been supported by the results of the informal survey organized by the Bologna Follow-up Group in 2007/2008. It has stated that unemployment is not really a “serious problem, but the job mismatch has been a challenge in Norway”, especially in relation to the percentage of graduates in the humanities and the social

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sciences. Additionally, the results of the candidates’ survey have proved that graduates of the humanities usually find jobs after graduation in spite of the existing beliefs about their lower levels of employment. The problem is finding a suitable job and a low level of engagement with the suitable “work environment” during their studies due to the academic orientation of many humanitarian disciplines. As mentioned by the MoER (2008-2009a: 5), “to succeed with the employment strategy, we must first succeed with our education strategy”. Increased knowledge and learning become the desirable outcomes of HE and are considered beneficial to individuals and society at large.

“Basic skills are important for enabling people to function well in their everyday lives. We need more knowledge and skills; both for addressing the increasingly complicated challenges in society and in order to evolve as human beings” (MoER, 2008-2009a: 5).

Thus, structuring education strategy to increase focus on employability of students altogether with their knowledge and skills base and to improve closer cooperation between the HE system and “the world of work” (MoER, 2005: 8) are the goals to achieve a better match with the labour market requirements. Increasing focus on employability in HE seem at first unrealistic due to many confrontations and still existing challenges, the main of which is the question of responsibility and possibility of incorporating all these changes within HE structure and curricula, especially in relation to “non-vocational disciplines”. But this issue has not been left aside and many practices have been carried out, including those at the UiO.
4 Empirical investigation of the four humanities master programmes at UiO

This chapter will provide the detailed description of the changes observed in the curriculum of the selected master programmes in connection with increased focus on employability initiated by the Faculty of humanities since 2003. The Faculty of humanities is selected because of its obvious relevance to the particular phenomenon of interest to the present research (Merriam, 1998). The master programmes for this research have been selected according to the purpose of this study to examine the variations of the attitude of traditional and interdisciplinary programmes towards introducing employability focus in their curricula. The short description of the programmes is presented below. The structural and methodological curricular changes will be analyzed in accordance with the perspective of Barnett et al. (2001) of three domains of the curriculum – “knowledge, action and self”. Their interaction will be discussed as well as possible challenges.

4.1 The description of selected master programmes

The pilot version of culture, environment and sustainability programme (CES) started in 2002 and initially belonged to the department of culture studies and oriental languages (IKOS) as a programmatic option of the culture and ideas programme. It is offered by The Centre for development and the environment (SUM) – an international research institution at the UiO. In spite of its interdisciplinary perspectives combined from both the social sciences and the humanities, the programme initially did not intend to belong to the Faculty of social sciences. Mentioned by the interviewees, CES did not want to compete with existing programme on development at this Faculty and did not want to be “swallowed up” by social sciences, but to remain interdisciplinary. Starting autumn semester 2010, the programme will no longer be a programmatic option, but will be offered solely by SUM, however will still belong to the Faculty of humanities due to administrative regulations. The programme will preserve the humanities component, but will strengthen its “development” component. It will try to include the word development into its title, due to the orientation of many courses on development
issues. There are 20 students currently studying at CES programme selected out of 300 applications. And the interest in the programme continues to rise due to the importance of environmental and development issues nowadays. CES graduates are educated for new positions in a growing number of national and international organizations, as well as research and commercial settings dealing with environment and development problems. The degree also serves as a solid preparation for students interested in pursuing further PhD studies.

The media studies programme (MS) was established in 1989, as a cross-disciplinary programme combining elements from both the social sciences and the humanities, which are divided as 50/50. It is offered by the department of media and communication. The programme enrolls 60 students in the bachelor programme and 55 students in the master programme each year. Both courses are very popular, but for the bachelor programme applications have been sinking. The interviewee mentions that they have gone from three applications per a student’s place to close to two in bachelors programme, but for the last couple of years the number of students has been rising again. For the master programme it is quite steady: from one and a half to two applications per a student’s place. The popularity of the programme is explained by the growing popularity of the media central to economy and society. The MS degree supplies the students with solid academic qualifications that are likely to provide openings for practical, administrative and academic careers, as well as prepares students to apply for doctoral research fellowships at the Faculty.

History has been taught at the UiO for many years, but history master programme (HM) stems from 2003 and is offered by the department of archaeology, conservation and history. As stated by the interviewee, it is one of the biggest programmes at the Faculty of humanities and at the UiO. Each year there is an intake of about 200 bachelor students, and approximately 90 master students. The interviewee has also emphasized that the students who apply to HM programme have broad interests in society, politics and they know that history is the one way of understanding how society works. They realize it is not a vocational programme, but a more general programme giving vague ideas to them which direction to go. However, it is a great option for those interested in the humanities and in society qualifying students for a wide range of jobs in both public and private sectors. HM graduates work in

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11 Culture, Environment and Sustainability. After completion / career opportunities. [http://www.uio.no/studier/program/kulturide-master/culture-environment/om/jobb-og-studiemuligheter.xml](http://www.uio.no/studier/program/kulturide-master/culture-environment/om/jobb-og-studiemuligheter.xml)

12 Media Studies. After completion / career opportunities. [http://www.uio.no/studier/program/medie-master/media-studies/om/jobb-og-studiemuligheter.xml](http://www.uio.no/studier/program/medie-master/media-studies/om/jobb-og-studiemuligheter.xml)
education and research, public administration and management, museums and archives, publishing/media, non-profit-organizations, education/training, management/project management, analysis/methods, research, archive, library and information work. Many graduates also work as teachers.

The English language programme (EL) is offered by the department of literature, area studies and European languages, as a programme option and a part of the language master programme. There are 35 students enrolled to this programme in 2008. Students specialize in various aspects of modern or older English such as detailed studies of different text types, particular grammatical constructions or lexical areas, differences between Norwegian and English, or varieties of the English language – regional and social, historical and modern. The graduates of the EL programme are mainly employed as teachers, translators, as well as by media industry, public administration, business companies and international organizations.

4.2 Interview analysis: understanding employability focus and its reasons

The interviews have gathered information about understanding employability focus in the humanities and have examined the need of the selected master programmes in increasing focus on employability in their curricula. The interview questions have been structured in accordance with the research questions and the analytical framework. The detailed interview guide is presented in the Appendix A. Additionally, the probing interview questions method has been used to get more information about different aspects of employability focus. The respondents’ answers are used in the form of quotations and directly in the text to structure the interview analysis.

a) Employability understanding

This term has appeared in the UiO strategies about ten years ago, as mentioned by practically all of the interviewees. But it has become more actively stressed only since some years ago.

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13 Historie (master - to år). Veien videre - jobb og studier. [http://www.uio.no/studier/program/historie-master/om/jobb-og-studiemuligheter.xml](http://www.uio.no/studier/program/historie-master/om/jobb-og-studiemuligheter.xml)

14 Studiestatistikk/Opptak/ Høyere grad/ Våren 2008

15 English Language (programme option). [http://www.uio.no/studier/program/sprak-master/english/samlet.xml](http://www.uio.no/studier/program/sprak-master/english/samlet.xml)
Interviewees from HM and CES programmes have described “employability” as having a “changing meaning”.

“It has been changing from a university career orientation towards more open perspectives; from educating just a good employee to an innovative and critical-thinking employee; from a simple advice to go to the Career center to creating good researchers and developing research-oriented skills of students” (CES respondent).

“Employability focus is not a revolution, but a sort of “evolution. The recent focus has shifted from previous orientation on the graduates’ employment rate towards developing competencies relevant for the labour market” (HM respondent).

All the interviewees have described employability focus as a “competence orientation”, “awareness” and a “guide” or a “supportive factor”. Regarding competence orientation, all the respondents have considered developing skills and competencies missing in a regular curriculum as an important part of employability focus, as presented in the quote below:

“Employability is about acquiring competencies that students can use not only to progress in their subject, but which they can employ when they start working” (HM respondent).

Awareness is described by the respondents as stressing what kind of jobs students can get with their background in the humanities and making these possibilities more visible both to students and to employers. Possibilities are required to be more visible for the students because of a broader orientation of their degrees and of a broader framework of skills embraced by the traditional humanistic education, as expressed in the following statement:

“A traditional humanistic education actually gives students quite a lot of skills that are transferable to the kinds of jobs our students get. But many students and many employers are not really aware of these skills. So, employability combines awareness and orientation on certain skills that might be useful” (MS respondent).

Developing useful skills and making students aware of the awaiting opportunities is considered by the respondents as providing students with a goal in their studies, which is necessary for their future employment. Some students are really proactive and they know what they want, but others need guidance. Employability focus becomes this kind of supportive factor, which makes students more comfortable about their choice or even “waking-up impulse” raising students’ awareness and motivation, which is illustrated by two quotes below.
“Employability is particularly important to those students who do not have clear idea of what they want to do. We might point them in the right direction. We give them ideas of what might be useful to them” (EL respondent).

“Employability makes students more determined in choosing a topic to work further in their studies” (CES respondent).

The focus on employability is different between traditional and interdisciplinary programmes, as well as between undergraduate and graduate programmes. Traditional disciplines such as HM and EL are more “internally” oriented towards raising awareness of their students about different competencies they learn. On the contrary, introducing employability focus the interdisciplinary programmes such as CES and MS is aimed more at meeting the demands of students, society and the overall requirements of the university administration. These programmes see the need in it since they are more “externally-orientated” and more loosely-structured and are designed not to teach one method within one field of knowledge. Moreover, it has been easier to develop “employability orientation” in a research center like SUM, since it is characterized by higher flexibility due to its smaller size. Employability focus tends to be represented stronger in the undergraduate programmes. But it has also become important in master programmes since master students are more at the forefront of labour market as mentioned by the HM respondent. Above all, orientation on employability in master programmes is also mentioned by the respondents as creating competent researchers.

In spite of all its importance, focus on employability is not set as a primary purpose for all selected master programmes. HM respondent confirms that employability focus is not a top priority for the programmes themselves, but more a matter of fact. It is more a concern of the Faculty that aims at matching the education with labour market needs and understands employability focus as a useful additional element and as a tool towards better awareness of practical application of the traditional humanities knowledge.

b) Reasons for increasing focus on employability in the Humanities

The purposes of increasing employability focus in the humanities are expressed rather indirectly. Master students are already aware of discipline specific knowledge from their previous undergraduate background or other experience. Motivation is just one of the components that make students select the particular programmes of study in the humanities, important but not the central one. Their primary motivation to pursue a master degree is
related to acquiring theoretical knowledge for the “purpose of developing their potential, attaining more freedom at work, becoming more involved in interesting and creative work, influence society and achieve important goals” (Jenkins, Breen & Lindsay, 2003: 33-34). In the quote below, one of the respondents claims:

“The main reason students decide to study at the Faculty of Humanities is the interest in a particular subject. They also ask themselves what I can do with it, but initially the personal interest prevails” (FH).

The HM programme respondent has claimed that the general interest in humanities and in society as primary motivation guiding their students in selecting this subject. The MS respondent has named students’ interest in the analysis and the theory or in doing more type of analytical work, rather than expecting to be prepared for a certain profession. EL programme students are said to be interested in mastering the language, and CES students are interested in making their contributing to “saving the world”. Respondents mentioned that students expect HEIs to provide them with necessary analytical skills and to guide them for their future professional development. According to the CES respondent, students are more motivated when given a chance to observe actual knowledge of researchers who are in the field, doing research and giving examples from the real world. This type of examples provides students with clearer understanding on how they can use their knowledge.

Another reason for increasing focus on employability in HE curriculum is seen by the interviewees mainly in “making students work” after graduation that indirectly reflects the goals of the governmental and university strategies. However, there are no precise governmental directives, like, for example in the UK, on implementing employability focus in Norwegian HE. Accordingly, it tends to be more the initiative of the Faculty administration and the programme leaders in response to the university strategies. Since determining the quality in the humanities have become validated against more diverse and diffuse external criteria (Gibbons et al., 1994: 100), university administrators address employability focus as an additional element on the way towards qualitative education according to the FH respondent. The programme leaders, for example HM respondent, consider the quality of the programmes is difficult to measure solely based on the influence of employability focus and the results of employment rates of students, especially when this focus is implemented more on the upper level, than on the departmental and programme levels.
The previous focus on the inputs of HE, such as resources and infrastructure (van Dam, 2004) has changed towards employment outcomes. In spite of research orientation of the master programmes, students are getting more interested in what they can do after graduation. They want to have education that gives them opportunity to get jobs relevant to their expectations and competencies that work requires and demands (Brown, 2003). “What are the values of my education? Why is it useful?” these are the questions students often pose as mentioned by the career center representative. The CES respondent confirms as well that many of the students want to go into outside world, as they possess the knowledge that makes them very good candidates either for the public or private sector. But according to Stephenson & Yorke (1998: 22), students’ graduateness as an important learning outcome besides knowledge should combine skills and awareness necessary for its practical application in the “real world”. That is why learning outcomes are presented to students more explicitly to make them more aware of certain professions and abilities they may obtain after graduation. It has been done by publishing information on the programme Internet sites about employment opportunities and other graduates’ experiences, as well as by introducing multiple initiatives in the curriculum and as extra-curricula activities. The FH respondent considers that:

“The sooner the students can get aware of their employability opportunities, the earlier they can start thinking about their career and plan it accordingly”.

Even though employability focus is not the primary motivation for the students to select particular programmes of study, their familiarity with possible employment opportunities and awareness of the practical implementation of theoretical knowledge may increase their future chances of finding relevant employment. Besides, it may certainly increase the attractiveness of the programmes both for the national and international students.

### 4.3 Curricula analysis: changes in “knowledge, action and self domains” in accordance with increased focus on employability

When employability is integrated into a research-oriented university model, it becomes more connected with the practical orientation of knowledge. “Knowledge, action and self domains” as constituent elements of a “performative curriculum” as described by Barnett et al. (2001), are shaped rather by the practical orientation of knowledge than by focus on employability. Employability focus in this case becomes the linking element connecting students and
academia with the outside world, however, still bounded by a traditional knowledge of the humanities.

4.3.1 Changes in “Knowledge domain”

a) New shape – transferring the boundaries

The respondents have mentioned that employability focus helps develop connections with the outside world and attract employers into the HE environment. For example, the EL respondent has characterized employability as some kind of a “translation device” between education and the world of work explaining the latter what the HE and particular disciplines are about. Permeability of the frontiers between the university and the wider world has obviously increased, but the nature of the programme and the organizational context still influence a lot how much this practical element can be introduced in the curriculum (Gibbons et al., 1994: 149). It is experiences as more difficult for the traditional disciplines since their knowledge is deeply rooted in academic environment. Thus, the HM respondent described HM programme as a network of people working in the same discipline. Even if outside lectures are occasionally invited, they are from the same field.

However, the FH and selected programmes have increased cooperation with various research organisations, institutions, non-governmental organisations, public services and international HEIs. The interdisciplinary programmes have introduced internships and exchange opportunities for students. Students in MS and CES programmes have the possibility to write their theses connected with the ongoing research projects. Students in MS programme have the possibility to get small grants from some companies for doing research in these organisations. Besides, programmes invite people who can present real results of their research and organize many extracurricular activities to help students be aware of wider spheres of knowledge application. Employability focus in this case is connected to developing research-based competencies of students.

b) New topics – orientation on global issues, research and internationalization

All selected master programmes have included into their curricular structure courses more or less related to the “real world” such as Global English (EL), Historic basic problems: Theory
and historiography (HM), Media and Globalization (MS), Cross Cultural Perspectives on the Environment (CES). These courses embrace either global elements or more deep analysis of the subject-based knowledge showing wider aspects of its possible application. International orientation of the programmes has been developed or in the process of developing and varying their curricula accordingly. Three of the programmes - MS, CES, EL enroll international students since they are taught in English or have English course options. MS programme is planning to add a “media management component” and create new courses taught in English, as stated by the MS respondent:

“By changing which courses we offer in English and creating new ones we will challenge our international students and give them more opportunities” (MS respondent).

EL programme is starting Erasmus Mundus programme English Linguistics next academic year:

“The new Erasmus Mundus programme in English Linguistics will help students get different experiences” (EL respondent).

HM programme is planning to add employability-related elements into History Methodology course. CES programme is changing its title towards being more “development”-oriented as it already has a number of courses on development issues.

Since employability of master students depends a lot on practical research skills, the research methodology courses have been introduced into all programmes curricula. Traditional subjects like HM and EL are implementing employability focus into their methodology courses, which are connected with the disciplines themselves. The HM respondent mentions that:

“We are trying to modify a course on “History Methodology” towards embedding different elements of employability into it, like presentation skills, useful for students whether they go for teaching or for any other profession” (HM respondent).

The EL respondent addresses the changes happening in the courses of Corpora in Language Research: Theory and Method (EL) and Språkvitenskapelig metode (Language Research Method):

“In our course, “Contrastive Linguistics”, we try to teach students to compare English with other different languages, which is particularly useful both for teachers and translators, as well as for people working with lexicography, etc.” (EL respondent)
In interdisciplinary programmes methodology courses are broader and more practically oriented. They teach students how to implement a wide variety of skills in practice, especially when writing their master thesis, which is mentioned by the CES informant:

“The practical skills students are taught are more related towards research methods. The first course students are taking is the interdisciplinary research methodology. They also have some kind of practical experience in an “academic sense” – learn how to collect data, how to analyze it, how to do fieldworks, interviews, textual analysis, etc.” (CES respondent)

c) New techniques and new forms of realisation– combining knowledge and methods within knowledge fields

Computers are to be found in the developing epistemological structure of all of the knowledge fields (Barnett et al., 2001: 441). In the EL programme student learn different types of discipline-related software, e.g. the analysis program WordSmith Tools and the database program FileMaker Pro, which are used in corpus linguistics, lexicography or making dictionaries. The CES programme gives its students an opportunity to take an online based course “Myths Narratives and Institutions: Critical perspective on environment and development” offered by the University of Bergen. In the MS programme studying computer related applications is a part of the programme, which students can take additionally to the main course. But acquiring skills and knowledge additional for their primary specialization depends much on the students’ initiatives than considered as a job for the university to teach them extensively. For example “Digital design” is an optional course where computers are used as a tool and not as a primary focus of the course as mentioned by the MS respondent. Students rather learn basic principles, which can give them primary knowledge and prepare them for further extensive studying, if needed. In History, as mentioned by the HM respondent, statistics and quantitative analysis courses can be taken by students as optional courses, only when students know they will use them as a part of their master theses.

Many topics appear that straddle sociology and politics (Barnett et al., 2001: 441). In the interdisciplinary programmes like CES students are taught how to combine methods from the humanities and social sciences with more scientific methods. New courses emerge, such as Environmental Philosophy in the CES programme taking into account such aspects of the humanities as history and literature, and combining them with environmental studies.
In spite of the positive attitude of all the programmes towards employability focus, adding it to the programmes’ curricula has always been difficult and required a complex approach due to the individualistic culture both of the disciplines as well as academics themselves. It requires too much consideration it terms of time and resources. Consequently, it is more difficult to implement employability focus into traditional disciplines like the HM programme since adding employability related elements to the traditional course is considered by the respondent to possibly influence or eliminate other more important elements. For these programmes the fear of losing traditional values is more obvious. As mentioned by the HM respondent, there is always a fear that going beyond the limit will cause losing more traditional knowledge. But at the same time they understand the need for more practical application of their traditionally oriented knowledge as they are quite far away from that “limit” yet.

4.3.2 Changes in “Action domain”: combining efforts to bring the “world of work” closer to the Humanities

The curriculum should be designed to stimulate students’ interest and to conceive students’ active participation (Martin, 2008: 305). This could be done by a proper structure, methodology, assessment and extra-curricular activities (Fink, 2003). One respondent sais that employability does not seem to trickle much into modules on the overarching level. It is rather implemented through developing broad abilities and skills, primarily related to the discipline and research and through various extra-curricula activities organized by the FH and the UiO Career centre. The comparative analysis of the selected study programmes has been done to review their curricula structure and skills taught in more details, which is presented in detail in Appendix B and is discussed in the following description of the case study results.

a) Programme structure

All selected master programmes are two-year programmes, comprising 120 credits each. The first year usually consists of number of optional and elective courses, with a discipline-specific or general research methodology courses being of primary importance. The second year is structured to write a master thesis, either performed by the students themselves on their own topics or in cooperation with other professional or research organizations.
The most obvious changes happened in the master programmes curricula reveal reorientation of the lecture-based education towards more diversified methods of teaching and learning. They are introduced to cover the breadth of knowledge new curriculum is trying to embrace (Barnett et al., 2001). According to the requirements of the Quality Reform, as confirmed also by the quotes of the two respondents below, lectures as traditional methods of presenting theoretical material have included practical tasks and discussions. In addition, all the programmes are required to organize seminars and colloquia to practice presentation, teamwork and oral communication skills of students.

“The reorientation was inevitable due to corresponding changes in society, that started preparing youth for their future professional goals beginning the eighth or ninth grade at school” (CC respondent).

“When the Quality Reform was introduced, the accent was made to have less lectures and to increase students’ activities. There has been a shift in the curriculum away from mass lectures towards seminars and colloquiums, and more writing assignments for students” (HM respondent).

All selected master programmes have introduced modules and courses structured to present or elaborate on practical results. As claimed by one of the respondents, the need to show the possible application of the theoretical knowledge has increased. The programmes organize guest lectures, teach research methodology courses, and provide internships. “Master Thesis Catalogue” or Vitenskapsbutikken16 for the students of the social sciences and the humanities helps students connect their research interests with ongoing practical research in different organizations. Students are given more flexibility to combine optional and compulsory courses that makes them plan their future employment or research interests accordingly.

Both the programme analysis and interviewees’ responses confirm that the assessment in all the programmes has changed towards more written exams necessary for the students to achieve more analytical and critical thinking skills, mentioned particularly by all the respondents. Besides, students can also select their exams either in the form of a term paper or written home exams. Usually, some presentations and group work precede the exams. The purpose for such an assessment, as mentioned by EL respondent, is to know how students can apply the knowledge on a higher level using their critical thinking skills. The major attention

16 http://www.uio.no/vitenskapsbutikken/
is paid to the thesis work since it is considered a way to students’ employability, as stated by the CES respondent:

“Writing master thesis students connect the theory they have studied with the practical part, and combine the fieldwork with their knowledge – that is when they become employable” (CES respondent).

In spite of all the attempts to introduce more practical employability related elements into the programmes curricula, many courses still remain theoretically oriented. Humanities are usually more difficult to implement an objective-based approach than in professional subjects with clear-cut requirements (Becher, 1994: 158). The knowledge has not changed much being still dependent on the humanitarian values, and professors do not think the programme structure has changed primarily due to the influence of increased focus on employability. Thus, the traditional humanities knowledge still preoccupies in many core subject-related courses. Only the methods showing the varied applications for the traditional knowledge and skills proliferate. It has been confirmed by the responses of the two interviewees below:

“Academic reasoning, critical-thinking and personal development in the Humanities have long tradition. These skills are valuable and will be valuable for any kind of work, and should be maintained» (MS respondent).

“I don’t know whether this is the influence of employability focus or the whole approach rooted in linguistics that influenced our practically oriented courses and components. That rather came out because of the methods we use” (EL respondent).

**b) Methodology: skills accentuation**

Increased focus on employability in the humanities has caused them to accentuate skills and competencies previously acquired by students in their regular curriculum, as well as concentrate on additional skills demanded by the labour market. The EL respondent mentions that professors are encouraged to certainly implement more in their curriculum and teaching methods than they are used to, but not as much as they start teaching differently. The MS respondent also states that employability focus has not been stressed much in the curriculum itself:

“We are adjusting it only a little. It is basically few simple skills, which we train while learning a theory” (MS).
Due to rather broad employment orientation of all selected master programmes their goal is to educate students who can apply knowledge on the higher level using their critical thinking skills suitable for different types of employment, mentions the CES respondent. Correspondingly, making skills aware to students and academic staff has been considered helpful to educate students who could be more interesting for the outside world. The FH respondent mentions this change has been supported a lot especially by younger academic staff. Multiple research and employability-oriented skills are practiced in all the programmes such as writing, analytical and critical thinking, abilities to analyze information, perform an in-depth research based study and process large quantities of information through scientific methods. MS programme respondent has accentuated team working and analytical skills. HM programme respondent has mentioned “fairly general discipline-specific competencies such as literature research and critical analysis and focus on students’ oral communication skills” as a response to labour market demands. EL respondent has stated English language knowledge as a primarily global skills and then developing writing and analytical abilities of students to prepare them for the varied career opportunities. The CES programme respondent has described the practical skills taught to students as more concerned with research methods: how to do fieldwork, how to combine methods from the humanities and social science, how to analyze critically various methods. Besides, the CES students are said to acquire some kind of practical experience in academic sense mainly connected with research design and analysis: how to collect data, analyze it, how to conduct interviews and textual analysis.

Acquiring research skills embodied in multiple oral and written assignments can be beneficial for students’ future occupations, even if further connected with research or not. Due to research orientation of the master programmes, master thesis has become a large part of the study programmes helping to preserve the general higher goal of the university as mentioned by the MS respondent. Recently it is getting more connected with real world problems for the students to develop a number of practical skills. All the respondents have mentioned that writing their master theses, students learn a multiple set of skills: to have an “independent interpretation of the literature they have read” (HM), “to understand the real research problems in their fields of study” (EL), “to explore different methodological approaches combining variety of methods” (MS) and “to complete an independent piece of work that will help them become employable” (CES).
In spite of all attempts of the Faculty to increase focus on employability in the programmes curricula, professors have a skeptical attitude to it since they do not see much correspondence of employability elements with the traditional humanitarian knowledge. They often hesitate what this or that element of employability may add to students’ subject understanding. The HM respondent mentions that typical question professors ask in relation to employability focus requirement is “What would students learn from it?”. On the other hand, professors often see it as an extra work and they distance from it accordingly thinking about employability as more related to programme administration duties. Thus, major employability related activities are coordinated and structured by the career and employability coordinator at the FH and the programme leaders.

**c) Extra-curricula activities**

Apart from curricula attempts to develop students’ employability skills and to link them with outside world, the number of extra-curricula activities aimed at enhancing employability of students has also increased at the faculty, departments and programmes levels. The advantage of these activities is that they help attract outside organisations into academia, which cannot be done in the framework of the regular curriculum. Mainly, they are organized by the FH in cooperation with the departments and programmes. There are also activities organized on the general university level mainly by the UiO Career centre.

At the Faculty level, some changes have been introduced at the result of the employability project (2003-2007\(^{17}\)). First, the regular “Career weeks” are organized every semester in cooperation with the programmes. Usually, it is a three-day event consisting of presentations of jobs in the private sector on the first day, debates and discussions on the second day\(^{18}\), and presentation of work opportunities in the public sector on the last day. However, it is always a problem for the FH to find narrow-specialized employers especially in the history or English language spheres to invite for this event. Second, the FH organizes trainings and seminars both for the study consultants and for the students. The seminars organized for students have concerned the following topics: “Working in the Cultural Sector”, “Working with Education”, “How the Humanities graduates are recruited”, “How to use Language and Literature”, “Can Humanities Communicate”, “Workplace for the Humanities”, etc. Former students are usually

\(^{17}\) [http://www.hf.uio.no/arbeidslivsrelevans/](http://www.hf.uio.no/arbeidslivsrelevans/)

\(^{18}\) [http://www.statsvitenskap.uio.no/nettlogger/frokostmedbernt/](http://www.statsvitenskap.uio.no/nettlogger/frokostmedbernt/)
invited for these seminars to present their experience. The seminars organized for the academic staff are called “Dialogue” where programme leaders and heads of different programme orientations together with the work representatives discuss how to exchange their experience and how to make their graduates better employable. Third, the Faculty has started increasing its networking opportunities with potential employers. It has developed the web portal for employers to register their research projects (“Vitteskapsbutikken”). It has also signed agreement with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to provide internships for the Norwegian students at the embassies of different countries.

At the departmental level, every programme employs a study consultant (Programkonsulent) responsible for the so-called “competence talks”. They discuss which courses would be more preferable for the students to take in relation to their future professional orientation and to make them aware of what kind of skills they would need more. “Alumni meetings” are organized by departments or by the students themselves. Thus, for example, former HM students have organized a meeting for History bachelor students who want to study further for master degree. They have presented the information about the master programme, related statistics, current activities and future career opportunities. Also students can talk to their professors to discuss their master theses options or future career prospective. Each department also organizes meetings with employment representatives to talk about opportunities for graduates of a certain discipline in more details.

At the University level, the most active unit responsible for students’ employability is the UiO Career Centre established in 1992. This unit belongs to SiO (The Foundation of Students Life in Oslo) and exists as a separate structure. The Career Centers at the University of Oslo is the biggest one of the six centers in Norwegian universities, and has only ten employees”. It cooperates with the FH as well as other Faculties in organizing Career Weeks and work seminars for the students. There is also a database of employers provided as a job-seeking portal for all University students. The centre offers workshops in basic job search, on how to write a professional CV and a cover letter, and a preparation course for the job interview. It also offers courses in basic business economy for students with no economic background19. Career centre organizes regular presentations where employers provide information about their organizations, work structure and available job opportunities. It is also possible to talk to a career advisor to discuss students’ competencies and abilities needed for their career plans.

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19 About the Career Centre. Our Services. http://www.karrieresenteret.uio.no/
Each year in October Career centre arranges the University’s career fair “Arbeidslivsdagen”. In addition, they arrange business presentations, smaller fairs, and visits to companies. The activities organized by the Career center are considered by the UiO as an important strategic tool to achieve the goals of employability.

**d) Combining all the changes**

The combined findings of the results of increased focus on employability in selected master programmes at the FH are presented in the following Table 3 partially adapted from Cranmer (2006):

Table 3. The model of methods of delivering employability skills in HE master curriculum in the Humanities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Delivered in the curriculum</th>
<th>Delivered outside curriculum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Programme structure</strong></td>
<td><strong>Employability skills</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recommended and encouraged by the Faculty administration</strong></td>
<td><strong>Developed by academic personnel, and integrated into mainstream</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral communication</td>
<td>More practically oriented courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>Master thesis course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing skills</td>
<td>Internships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical thinking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to analyse information and literature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative thinking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group work (teamwork)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research methodology skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: adapted from Cranmer (2006: 172)

20 [http://www.matnat.uio.no/aktuelt/arbeidslivsdagen.html](http://www.matnat.uio.no/aktuelt/arbeidslivsdagen.html)
Analyzing the curricular changes summarized in the given table, it is obvious to notice that the number of organized employability-related activities is extensive, but major ones are taking place outside the programme curriculum. However, as mentioned by Career and Employability Coordinator, there is low participation of students in these events in spite of their extensive promotion. Increased focus on employability has influenced more structural changes in the programmes curricula necessary to accentuate employability-related skills. The traditional knowledge has not been influenced much and only additional modules or courses have been added to the regular curriculum or supplied with additional skills accentuation. Ideally, employability focus should be derived from a partnership of academic and career staff. Career colleagues should have a place on faculty and department teaching committees to enable communication and raise everyone’s awareness of emerging employability agendas and opportunities (Kneale, 2008: 101-102). But the main problem is that many careers advisers do not usually have an input into programme design and delivery and thus may advise students whose programmes have done little to help them make strong claims to employability. Good careers advice is of course a necessity, but it is not a substitute for degree programmes designed with the employability policy in mind (Knight and Yorke (2), 2003: 5).

4.3.3 Changes in “Self domain”: accent on skills and self-confidence

When asked at the UiO Career centre to describe their knowledge, skills, personal traits and motivation, the easiest way for the students is to describe their knowledge, then the skills, as mentioned by the CC respondent.

However, all selected programmes have stressed such skills accentuated in their curricula as communication, teamwork, presentation, analytical abilities, critical thinking, creativity, writing skills, abilities to work independently and reach deadlines. Developing these skills is understood by the respondents as matching the labour market demands and giving students better guidance and awareness of their future employment prospects. At the same time, communication and analytical skills are related as primary principles of learning in the humanities, which traditionally characterize these disciplines (Martin, 2008). Instead, practicing other missing skills, such as business thinking, effective presentation, team-work is
considered as employability focus more close to the labour market needs, which is strongly supported by all respondents. The quote of the MS respondent confirms this:

“Academic reasoning, critical-thinking and personal development in the Humanities have had a long tradition. These skills are valuable and will be valuable for any kind of work, and should be maintained. But these are larger values, there are also smaller values that can be added to the curriculum, such as simple business thinking, effective presentation, team-work etc.» (MS).

The interviewees have mentioned developing oral communication skills such as “oral exams and/or thesis presentation”, especially relevant to the language and history study and the knowledge of “basic business economy” either as a part of the programme or a separate course desirable for the MS programme.

However, academic staff themselves does not think of skills accentuation as a strong result of increased focus on employability. And raising awareness of skills solely does not increase students’ self-confidence. In its heyday, the study of the classics stood at the pinnacle of scholarly prestige among the non-vocational disciplines (Becher and Trowler, 2001: 175). Nowadays, only half of the humanities graduates perceive their education as very attractive on the labor market compared to other educational degrees (Kandidatundersøkelsen 2008:11/230). The large number of humanities graduates, especially from the traditional disciplines, still work as teachers though their specialty is not primarily related to teaching (Kandidatundersøkelsen 2008: 6/230). The FH respondent also confirms that many graduates understand they can do particular things, but sometimes they lack self-confidence. Thus, the students’ beliefs regarding their personal efficacy have an effect on their future performance. It is not enough to have a repertoire of cognitive, social, emotional and behavioral sub-skills – “one has to be able to integrate them and have a belief system that facilitates this integration when facing the myriad of challenges thrown up by the world” (Knight & Yorke, 2002: 266-267).

Embedding employability to influence students’ self-beliefs is seen as risky. However, academic staff should have available strategies for encouraging students and designing programmes to foster students into that direction. Curriculum should be designed to stimulate students by it (Martin, 2008: 305). Raising not only students’ awareness of their skills, but also their interest in the subject and the knowledge of the practical side of their degree, will definitely increase students’ chances of successful employment matching their degree. Being
able to articulate the skills gained through their research training and experience will help master students to secure graduate employment in university and non-university sectors (Kneale, 2008: 110). Thus, tuning curriculum through many awareness-raising activities and employability-aware reflection can be very powerful (Knight & Yorke, 2004a; Kneale, 2008: 110). Altogether, curricular aims and design, learning and teaching, and assessment, especially formative feedback - all need to be pointing in the same general direction – to increase the quality of education, students’ employability and students’ motivation and awareness.

### 4.4 Tradition vs. interdisciplinarity: difference in employability focus

Having analyzed the response of the four selected programmes towards increased focus on employability, it is obvious to notice the difference in approaching this phenomenon in traditional and interdisciplinary subjects. Transdisciplinarity is especially endemic in the Humanities since they are more loosely organized and their disciplinary frontiers are more permeable. It has been easier for them to combine subjects and to attract additional knowledge (Gibbons et al., 1994; 138). The characteristic of transdisciplinarity to generate and sustain knowledge in the context of application involving both empirical and theoretic components is performed in interdisciplinary programmes, like CES and MS.

Initially, these programmes are more “externally” oriented and more flexible in their attempts to adapt to changes in the external environment such as labour market demands, changes in society, and developments in research and knowledge spheres. Employability focus in these programmes is mentioned by the CES respondent as “a change influenced by modern life”. The students select these programmes based on their future practical needs because environmental issues are the top priority nowadays in many countries and on many levels and media role in society is also getting more importance. Accordingly, the ability of the graduates of these programmes to find suitable jobs after graduation is higher in comparison to students from traditional humanities subjects with broader orientation. As reported by the MS respondent, 20% of students quitted the MS programme because they had found relevant jobs not even requiring them to have completed their master degree.
Due to their higher flexibility, it is easier for these programmes to change their curricula and teaching methods to incorporate more employability and practical components and to combine courses. It is also easier for them to develop networks with the “outside world”. The MS programme has only one compulsory course in research methodology, but students can select other courses as optional both from The Department of Media and Communication and from other departments at the UiO. There are 16 courses taught in English related to Media and Communication. There are some practically oriented courses like “Work as a research assistant” (MEVIT489621), where students can participate in a research project within media science in which they have independent responsibility for conducting part of the project. There is also a course in Media Economics introducing some of the main economic concepts and issues affecting the media, and accessible to students without a background in economics. Another course, Conference attendance with presentation (MEVIT489522) helps students to make a presentation of a piece of research-relevant work in an academic context, which is both good for their presentation skills and for their future academic career. Students from the MS programme have an opportunity to select between writing a master thesis in the form of a dissertation, more theoretically oriented, or writing a practical master thesis, but both of them require thesis presentation.

The CES Programme also combines varied courses, most of which are designed to develop students’ interdisciplinary research skills, group work, analytical and critical thinking skills. The majority of the courses provide thorough theoretic understanding of the knowledge students are learning and are aimed at developing students’ cross-cultural orientation. Many lectures are supplemented by the practical examples in the form of case studies presented by SUM researchers. One course - The Science and Politics of Climate Change- is organized in collaboration between CICERO (Center for International Climate and Environment Research - Oslo) and SUM. Another course - Development and Environment - expects students to write a joint paper discussing the results from their field study in relation to the chosen topic. Some other elective courses are offered by the Faculty of social sciences.

For the traditional humanities disciplines, it has been more difficult to make their knowledge practically applied and to involve other counterparts into their research activities since their curriculum is mostly “discipline-led” (de Weert, 1995: 35). For these disciplines, as

21 http://www.uio.no/studier/emner/hf/imk/MEVIT4896/index-eng.xml
22 http://www.uio.no/studier/emner/hf/imk/MEVIT4895/index-eng.xml
traditionally less exposed to the world of work, increasing focus on employability has not influenced their structure a lot. Both the HM and EL programmes are more “internally”-directed since students’ initial interests rather relate to subject fields than to their future employment needs. These programmes are bounded by their knowledge environment, and are traditionally characterized by more individualistic culture. The HM programme is a theoretically oriented programme which makes it problematic to introduce employability focus. The research methodology course is more discipline-specific and lacks statistic and quantitative methods, as mentioned by the HM respondent. These courses are usually taken by students only in case they want to use these methods for their master theses. Optional courses can be chosen only in case to replace the “reading course” (“Realhistorisk leseemne”) with relevant study courses or as an additional opportunity for the students to know more about the subject field. The lectures are generally taught by professors from the History Department. There are some occasional lectures given by the professors from other universities but with the specialization in the same knowledge field.

Many work spheres are considered as “opening up for the people with English language degree” since English language nowadays is the global language of communication. However, English in the context of the EL master programme is the primary subject and not a part of the curriculum of a “vocationally” oriented programme. Many courses offered by this programme are designed to raise students’ awareness of the interplay between theory, method and data in the English language. They are mainly methodologically and theoretically oriented in terms of research, literature comparative analysis and thesis preparation. Some provide training in written presentation and argumentation. At the same time, there are optional courses, such as Global English, Fundamental Concepts of Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Text and Translation, Texture and Linguistic Structure, which are more broadly and practically oriented. The EL programme is mainly intended to prepare English language linguists. Those who are interested in having other professions have to attain additional qualifications, like taking either PPU\textsuperscript{23} (Pedagogic) course or some kind of business oriented degree after graduation. Among the students of this programme there are some previous graduates from the Faculty of Education and some who have either studied or are taking one or several courses in pedagogy. EL programme does not see any need in introducing some kind of specific business or other professionally oriented courses in its

\textsuperscript{23} \url{http://www.uio.no/studier/emner/uv/ils/PPU3120/}
4.5 The challenges Humanities are facing when incorporating employability focus in their curriculum

“Work-based” learning has a stronger orientation in the disciplines and universities with more pragmatic outlooks, such as former polytechnics, institutions of technology etc. (Boud & Symes, 2000: 16). In traditional HEIs, it is full of controversies and contradictions. Employability focus can not be equally implemented in all the curricula: there is no “one size fits all” solution; and there are still some financial, managerial and discipline-specific obstacles preventing departmental attempts in doing this. The major challenges to increase employability focus in the humanities master programmes are broad orientation of the programmes of study and students’ experiences; conflict between practice and tradition; lack of motivation both for academics and students; limited awareness with the “world of work” and disparity between the jobs offered by the labour market with broad humanities orientations.

Since employability does not have a universal definition, it is generally understood as “something related to developing competencies relevant for the labour market” in the words of the HM respondent. It is difficult to accentuate it in the broadly oriented disciplines and for the broadly-oriented students, like master students. There is a kind of contradiction observed. Due to their initial broad orientation, interdisciplinary programmes, try to focus their priorities on the needs of the labour market and plan to be more specific. The CES program is going to
change its title into “Culture, Environment and Development” instead of “Sustainability”, and the MS programme is trying to add media management courses into its curriculum. Traditional disciplines, on the opposite, are opening up and are trying to combine programmes with broader focus like Erasmus Mundus English linguistics programme in the EL programme.

The main challenge employability focus in the Humanities comes across is the format, or the way in which it should be organized, as supported by the words of the HM respondent:

“Traditionally, humanities are not a «professional orientation», so it makes it more challenging to find out how we should design employability”.

For all selected programmes it has not been difficult to articulate employability-related skills since they are not significantly different from those traditionally present in the humanities. But the question of how to design employability and make it more visible is more vital. There are multiple initiatives of introducing employability into HE curricula. In its “ideal type” employability is represented in several principles which smudge into each other: “employability through the whole curriculum; employability in the core curriculum; work-based or work-related learning incorporated as one or more components within the curriculum; employability-related module(s) within the curriculum; work-based or work-related learning in parallel with the curriculum” (Knight & Yorke, 2004b: 11). However, in practice, it is more difficult to set a focus on one particular type of employability in all the selected programmes.

Generally employability is perceived as a recommendation and is something more indirect and implicit. The EL respondent mentions that they don’t see the need in it to be introduced formally as in this case “humanities disciplines will lose their status as non-vocational”. Thus academic staff tries to distance somehow from it. There is always a danger that giving more focus to employability will make humanities programmes more vocationally oriented. Thus, it is understood as important, but not introduced so much explicitly on the programme level. Mainly, it is incorporated in separate research-oriented modules and thus gives the possibility for the master programmes to combine their need for preparing future researchers with practical outward orientation. The FH respondent has also stressed that there is a limited awareness of academic staff of the humanities, especially traditional disciplines, of what is actually happening on the labour market. Besides, all the respondents have mentioned that
academics are not aware whether introduced employability elements have been really useful to the students due to the absence of more detailed feedback. Employability often depends on the personal initiatives of the academic staff, but most often they lack time and motivation to work additionally on it. They are not willing to take extra work without getting paid for that, as referred to by the HM respondent. There are not enough resources to incorporate more employability-related activities in the curriculum of the programmes and some activities have even been stopped because of this. The available funds are limited to invite scholars and researchers, and the regulations restrict inviting lectures from other departments and faculties at the UiO.

Secondly, in spite of the varied attempts of the FH, the majority of the humanities graduates, especially at the traditional disciplines like EL and HM, are still employed after graduation as teachers even though teaching is not the primary focus of their degrees, as seen in the graduates’ survey results. Does it mean that the vision of the students has not changed, or that they cannot fully understand their opportunities and competencies to be capable to find jobs in other sectors, or that the employment sector is not fully aware of their competencies? Can it relate to the fact that teaching curriculum has not changed enough to give students broad vision of their perspectives? Or may be it is partially a result of high competition the humanities graduates experience in comparison with graduates from other, more professionally oriented degrees like business studies or public administration, which makes students feel less self-confident about their skills and abilities?

Thirdly, it is difficult for the humanities, especially for more traditional disciplines, to develop links with the outside employers. The networking opportunities for all the programmes are still weak since low correspondence of the humanities subjects with the needs of the labour market. The higher interaction with the “world or work” is still observed more in interdisciplinary programmes, which attract potential employers to involve students in practical research projects, like, for example, Telenor that gives small grants for MS students and CICERO researchers give lectures on the topics important for CES curriculum. For traditional programmes like EL and HM, interaction is lower, and depends much on the activities organized by the Faculty of Humanities and the Career centre.

And finally, Humanities see the need for increasing focus on employability in their curricula, but both interdisciplinary and traditional programmes have underlined that the general higher goals of the university education are much more important. Due to the lack of clear
regulations, academics see employability focus more as a responsibility of the Faculty, and only as an “informal” procedure when related to their own teaching. There is always a question in the words of one informant: “Would students learn anything from it?”
5 Conclusion

5.1 Increasing focus on employability in “non-vocational” disciplines: strengths and weaknesses

This thesis has studied the increased focus on employability in “non-vocational” disciplines, humanities in particular. The researcher has followed the strategies of the UiO and the Faculty of humanities relating this phenomenon, as well as the changes in the curricula of selected master programmes. The conducted interviews with the FH and the programmes representatives have helped accumulate varied information about the faculty and programme activities in relation to employability focus and come up with a number of conclusions.

The reason for increasing focus on employability in the Humanities at the UiO is primarily connected to the practical reorientation of knowledge, as noted by the EL respondent: “employability is accentuated since the need to show the possible application of the theoretical knowledge has increased”. This process has been intensified by the overall UiO goal to strengthen its position “as a research university of high and international standing”, pronounced both in the UiO strategic plans for 2005-2009 and 2010-2020. Attaining this goal, UiO is aimed at providing research-based education with “a central role given to learning outcomes and the competency of graduates” (UiO, 2005-2009: 5-9). Competences, knowledge and technology awareness are considered the most important parts necessary for graduates’ adaptation to a competitive and sustainable knowledge economy (UiO, 2010-2020: 2, 12).

Employability focus in this context is perceived as a new kind of teaching and learning in response to practical reorientation of knowledge. It does not substitute the traditional humanities knowledge, but becomes a linking element and a translation device between the HE and the “world of work” as mentioned by the programmes respondents. Both the curricula and interview analysis of the present study have also confirmed that in a research-oriented university, like UiO, employability at the graduate level is connected to the acquisition of research-based skills and development of more extensive cooperation with research organizations. Thus, employability is rather perceived by the present case study master
programmes as a “supportive factor” necessary to prepare future researchers and showing them what possibilities they can have in the future.

Employability focus is not the primary reason master students decide to study humanities disciplines, but the FH respondent considers increasing focus on employability as an important element to show to students that the Faculty and academic staff care for them and for their future. The interviewed respondents have also supported this point of view organizing and taking part in multiple initiatives in that respect. However, individualistic culture of the humanities as described by Biglan (1973) still prevails both in the disciplines and among academics. Academics do not strongly oppose to it, as they have changed their way of teaching, presenting material and interacting with students. But they do not associate it primarily with the influence of increased focus on employability since they have been teaching like this for quite some time. Some respondents consider it more connected with the results of the Quality Reform in Norway. Involving academic staff in employability development process does not mean “to make them less autonomous or deprive them of their knowledge”, as mentioned by the FH respondent. Academics should be the part of the process, as they are considered responsible for their students’ future, either if they stay at the university to pursue further science or choose other career opportunities. However, they should be more exposed to the “outside world experience” related to their disciplinary knowledge. Besides, employability focus requires a mixture of methods. However, in many cases academics are not capable to implement it due to lack of relevant support, resources and time mentioned by practically all respondents. Thus, employability focus is mainly implemented by the FH with an attempt to connect it to Humanities knowledge. The FH and the UiO should promote policies supporting academics participation in developing employability related activities.

“Being employed means having a job, but being employable means having the qualities needed to maintain employment and progress in the workplace” (Lees, 2002: 3). Developing employability skills in HE emerges as a complex area lacking definitive answers (Cranmer, 2006: 173). For the humanities it is especially obvious since their traditional set of skills coincides to some extent with the transferable skills demanded by employers. Thus, it is always a question for the humanities if their students need additional career-specific and practical-oriented knowledge since employability has been understood as an accentuation of necessary skills demanded by the labour market. But according to Baker and Hensen (2010:
64) if students are aware of how and why their employability skills developed and recognize the importance of this approach, they will take ownership of these initiatives, embracing far more chance of success. Having analyzed the interviewees’ responses, it is possible to conclude that programmes and the FH intend to intensify the focus on employability in their studies further on, but the main goal still prevails, which is how to preserve the traditional knowledge and make more visible its practical application.

Since curriculum remains one of the most important products of HEIs (Barnett et al., 2001: 435), increased focus on employability in HE certainly influences its structure and purpose. Analyzing corresponding changes in the humanities curricula, the humanities knowledge is hardly influenced by increased focus on employability as it has a stable position in the curricular structure difficult to implement employability focus into it. The practical component in the curriculum of such programmes is represented by accentuating skills, which are called by one of the respondents as “a few simple skills” because they are mainly connected with the humanities traditional orientation and strengthening those that are missing, but demanded by the labour market. As mentioned by the EL respondent these particular skills can have a broad application for the students in the future:

“...these writing and analytical skills prepare students to become proper candidates either to work for the government or to write analytic reports and to make research as well as to follow for PhD” (EL).

Thus, students are able to develop and demonstrate skills and knowledge missing in regular curriculum and to increase their chances of success on the labour market. Skills other than the subject skills as well as additional knowledge of the cultures and societies of specific countries and experience of living and working overseas develop attributes for employability that only subject skills cannot provide (Canning, 2009). Thus traditional programs should increase more flexibility into their curriculum and be more open for the national and international cooperation, but the latter ones still requires extensive support and efforts. Accordingly, proper education for employability including a balanced mixture of curricular and extra-curricular activities aimed at developing knowledge, skills and self-awareness alongside with external and individual factors influence successful outcomes of HE determined by the production of highly-skilled and employable graduates, which is represented in the following Figure composed by the researcher:
Figure 2. Factors influencing individuals’ employability

- EXTERNAL FACTORS
- INDIVIDUAL FACTORS

GRADUATES’ EMPLOYABILITY

“Proper education for employability”: CURRICULUM
(KNOWLEDGE ACTION SELF)

Learning outcomes

Extra-curricular activities and modules

- ‘Fitness for purpose’
- ‘Personal benefits’
The results of the present research support the Barnett’s et al. (2001) “performativity theory”, where the “knowledge domain” still visibly preoccupies the humanities curriculum. Closer connection with the world of work depends more on the nature of the disciplines (subject areas), the nature of the programmes, their curricula, attitude of academics, involvement of students and interaction with the world of work. Employability is easier to implement in interdisciplinary programs, which structure is initially oriented on external needs and demands and where the boundaries are easily permeable. Also structuring employability related modules and courses in the form of extra-curricula activities with innovative, student-centred and problem-based approaches can help avoid competition from other programmes and pressure from the senior management (Baker & Henson, 2010: 74) However, as concluded by the Coimbra group report (2009) tailoring education programmes to immediate labour market needs is not the way to increase graduates’ employability. On the contrary, it may lead to higher chances of unemployment for the involved students after graduation. Thus developing awareness of the skills traditionally preserved by humanities graduates altogether with wide variations of the curricula (Martin, 2008) will definitely increase students’ successful employment. The development of these skills can also help increase current academic performance of students (Baker and Henson, 2010: 73).

The FH respondent has also mentioned that employability focus should be “anchored in the whole organization that everybody could benefit – giving students good education and making them aware of their skills and abilities”. Thus, promotion of employability focus requires the combined efforts and involvement of a wide range of individuals – academics, career personnel and senior management/administrators (Baker & Hensen, 2010: 64). It should not be left only to the efforts of the Career Center or specially appointed personnel. Ideally, it should be derived from a partnership of academic and career staff. Respectively, employability should have a long-term orientation, and the role of HEIs in this process will always be discussed. In the context of UiO, employability is not a “saviour” for the Humanities since they do not observe high problems with employment of their graduates. But it questions the necessity of implementing employability focus in HEIs and in the curriculum of the humanities in particular. If employability is definitely an important role performed by HEIs, then it is not only about getting graduates into jobs. First of all, it is not just about teaching skills but improving the relationship between HE and work (Moreau & Leathwood,

Secondly, it is about empowering students to become critical learners and “developing their critical, reflective and transformative abilities” (Lees, 2002). And finally, from the perspective of HEIs employability is about the social role of future graduates (Coimbra Group, 2009). Thus, increasing focus on employability and interacting all the domains of the curriculum – “knowledge, action and self” will possibly increase the social responsibility and research functions of the university as mentioned in UiO Consultation document for 2010-2020 that can be regarded as a major strength of further increasing focus on employability.

The weaknesses are still many. The most important one is to increase participation both of the academics and the students in employability strengthening process. The HM respondent has stated that “the practical side needs to be discussed with and presented to students to get their ideas across”. It will help increase awareness of students’ expectations and make them feel they are the part of this process. Also, employability is introduced mostly on the informal level in the humanities as there is a fear it could change the “non-vocational” status of the humanities if introduced formally. Even though employability causes a conflict with existing values in HE and in the humanities, at the same time it cannot be left aside due to inevitable change of the whole education system, and should be seen as a certain innovation leading to long-term results. But what is a real use-value of the curriculum of the master programmes of the Humanities: employability focus or traditional knowledge needs further exploration and research.

### 5.2 Further implications

The effectiveness of increasing focus on employability in the humanities and enhancing graduates’ generic capabilities remains an open question that requires continuing research. The results of the present study suggest several further implications.

Without academic staff intervention and support, students’ awareness of employability and career services facilities are unlikely to increase (Kneale, 2008: 99; 110). The observed low level of involvement of the academics in the employability process according to the results of the present case study may implicate further research to study particular reasons preventing academics from active participation in increasing focus on employability. For the university graduates, university learning may be moving in ways that influence employability, but do
students realize there is a change, and do they appreciate the value of reflection on how they learn in addition to what they learn (Kneale, 2008)? Since the skills are considered important to accentuate in raising employability level of the university graduates it would also be interesting to analyze which skills in particular are considered helpful by the graduates in their future employment. And whether the skills awareness has played a major role in their employment in comparison to subject knowledge and practical experience. As confirmed by Knight & Yorke (2003, 2004), the ways enhancing students’ employability are argued to be more transient events rather than the sustained learning engagement, thus the results of the complex learning influencing students’ employability including curricula and extra-curricular activities can also be analyzed. The detailed analysis of the employment choices of master graduates whether connected to research or not and the influence of research-oriented skills on their further employment would be interesting to study in a research-intensive university. And finally, the attitude of the humanities students towards increased focus on employability could be studied as well as the reasons for their low level of participation in employability related events, as mentioned by the FH respondent and reported by the candidates’ survey.

According to the FH respondent, university administrators address employability focus as an additional element on the way towards qualitative education as a result of the Quality reform in Norway. However, in this case, will accentuating skills and increasing practical application of knowledge influence the overall quality of higher education and the humanities programmes, in particular? Since the job mismatch is the most important issue for the humanities graduates, the level of engagement of the traditional humanities disciplines with the world of work needs to be strengthened.
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http://www.kslll.net/PoliciesAndAchievements/ExampleDetails.cfm?id=17

Ministry of Education and Research (MoER), Norway


University of Oslo (UiO) http://www.uio.no/english/


Consultation Document for UiO’s strategy 2010–2020

UiO Seminar: A stronger role for European universities? 19.01.2010,
http://www.uio.no/om_uio/arrangementer/andre-arrangementer/2010/januar/strategi-europe.html

UiO Karrieresenteret http://www.karrieresenteret.uio.no/

Faculty of Humanities, UiO http://www.hf.uio.no/english/


Kandidatundersøkelsen 2008 http://www.sv.uio.no/studier/kandund08.html

Studiestatistik http://www.hf.uio.no/internt/studier/studiestatistik/index.html

Studier og arbeidsliv http://www.hf.uio.no/studier/karriere/index.html

Studietilbud ved HF http://www.hf.uio.no/studier/studietilbud/master.html

Strategisk plan, årsplaner og årsrapporter http://www.hf.uio.no/om-fakultetet/plan-rapport/#1
Arbeidslivsrelevans: [http://www.hf.uio.no/arbeidslivsrelevans/](http://www.hf.uio.no/arbeidslivsrelevans/)

Vitenskapsbutikken: [http://www.uio.no/vitenskapsbutikken/](http://www.uio.no/vitenskapsbutikken/)

**Selected master programmes:**

Culture, environment and sustainability (CES)

[http://www.uio.no/studier/program/kulturide-master/culture-environment/om/jobb-og-studiemuligheter.xml](http://www.uio.no/studier/program/kulturide-master/culture-environment/om/jobb-og-studiemuligheter.xml)

Media studies (MS)

[http://www.uio.no/studier/program/medie-master/media-studies/om/jobb-og-studiemuligheter.xml](http://www.uio.no/studier/program/medie-master/media-studies/om/jobb-og-studiemuligheter.xml)

Historie master (HM)

[http://www.uio.no/studier/program/historie-master/om/jobb-og-studiemuligheter.xml](http://www.uio.no/studier/program/historie-master/om/jobb-og-studiemuligheter.xml)

English language (EL).

[http://www.uio.no/studier/program/sprak-master/english/samlet.xml](http://www.uio.no/studier/program/sprak-master/english/samlet.xml)
Appendix A: Interview guide

Interview questions

1. Employability definition

1) What do you understand by employability focus in higher education? What does employability mean for the Humanities?

2) Have there been any significant changes as to stronger focus on employability over the last years at the Faculty of Humanities and your department/programme in particular?

3) Is employability focus considered important to be addressed by the strategies of the Faculty of Humanities/ your Department/programme?

2. Programme specific employability focus

1) What is the main purpose of increasing focus on employability for this programme?

2) How does your programme address employability in its educational context?

3) What elements of employability are the mostly stressed in the curriculum of your Programme?

4) Are students satisfied with the outcomes of the programme? Are the expected learning outcomes reached?

3. Changes

1) What are the changes happening in the curriculum and teaching methodology of your Programme in relation to increased focus on employability?

2) What are the particular actions taken to increase students’ awareness of the “real world practices” connected with their discipline?

3) Have the networking opportunities with the «outside world» increased and how are they reflected in the curriculum?

4) What is the attitude of the faculty members towards “employability”? Can you describe your personal experience of engaging with “employability” in higher education and your attitude towards it, if any?

5) What are the benefits and challenges of “employability-related” practices for your programme?
## Appendix B: Comparative table of the curriculum analysis of the four selected master programmes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEDIA STUDIES</th>
<th>Teaching methods</th>
<th>Oral communication and/or presentation skills</th>
<th>Writing skills</th>
<th>Analytical and critical thinking skills</th>
<th>Research methodology skills</th>
<th>Network / discussions</th>
<th>Group work (team work) / discussions</th>
<th>Basic business/ working knowledge skills</th>
<th>International orientation</th>
<th>Exam/Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JOUR4330 “Freedom of expression”</td>
<td>Lectures seminars, discussions, additional perspectives to the texts</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Home exam (10 pages paper)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOUR4421 International Journalism</td>
<td>Lectures seminars; Invited scholars and professional journalists; workshops; individual supervision</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Two oral/written presentations and term paper up to 20 pages</td>
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<tr>
<td>MEVIT3220 Media and Globalisation</td>
<td>Lectures seminars</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10 pages paper (possible in Norwegian, Swedish, Danish or English)</td>
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<tr>
<td>MEVIT4110 Media panics</td>
<td>Lectures and discussions in the mornings, small group assignments and feedback in the afternoons</td>
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<td>Home exam on a given topic over a period of 3 days</td>
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<tr>
<td>MEVIT4121 Media in China</td>
<td>Lectures and seminar discussions</td>
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<td>Term paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>MEVIT4130 Mediatized</td>
<td>Lectures and seminars</td>
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<td>Term paper</td>
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<td>Course Number</td>
<td>Course Title</td>
<td>Type of Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>MEVIT4300</td>
<td>Media Economics</td>
<td>Home exam on a given topic over a period of 3 days</td>
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<tr>
<td>MEVIT4800</td>
<td>Perspectives and methods in media research</td>
<td>Two exams: Portfolio assessment. School exam (4 hours).</td>
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<tr>
<td>MEVIT4895</td>
<td>Conference attendance with presentation</td>
<td>The abstract presented by a student at the conference/seminar.</td>
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<tr>
<td>MEVIT4896</td>
<td>Work as a research assistant</td>
<td>Report of 2500 words in the light of the work done</td>
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<tr>
<td>MEVIT4091</td>
<td>Master's Thesis in Media Science, with presentation</td>
<td>Master's thesis in the form of a dissertation</td>
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<tr>
<td>MEVIT4991</td>
<td>Practical Master's Thesis in Media Science, with presentation</td>
<td>The practical production may consist of an audio-visual or multi-media production</td>
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</table>

- Home exam on a given topic over a period of 3 days
- Two exams: Portfolio assessment. School exam (4 hours).
- The abstract presented by a student at the conference/seminar.
- Report of 2500 words in the light of the work done
- Master’s thesis in the form of a dissertation
- The practical production may consist of an audio-visual or multi-media production
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Teaching methods</th>
<th>Oral communication and/or presentation skills</th>
<th>Writing skills</th>
<th>Analytical and critical thinking skills</th>
<th>Research methodology skills</th>
<th>Networking</th>
<th>Group work (team work) / discussions</th>
<th>Basic business/working knowledge skills</th>
<th>International orientation</th>
<th>Exam/Assessment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SUM3000</td>
<td>Development and environment</td>
<td>Lectures</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td></td>
<td>A joint paper discussing the results from their study field. Individual examination.</td>
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<tr>
<td>SUM4000</td>
<td>Development and environment</td>
<td>Lectures</td>
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<td>Individual term paper</td>
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<td>SUM4011A</td>
<td>Research Methods (I)</td>
<td>Lectures</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<td>Classroom exam</td>
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<td>SUM4011B</td>
<td>Research Methods (II)</td>
<td>Lectures</td>
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<td>Portfolio assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>SUM4012</td>
<td>Cross-Cultural Perspectives on the Environment</td>
<td>Lectures</td>
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<td>SUM4014</td>
<td>Environmental Philosophy and Ethics</td>
<td>Lectures</td>
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<tr>
<td>SUM4015</td>
<td>The science and politics of climate change</td>
<td>This course is collaboration between CICERO and SUM</td>
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<td>SUM4018</td>
<td>Corporate Social Responsibility</td>
<td>Lectures and seminars</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<td>Course Code</td>
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<td>Oral Communication and/or Presentation Skills</td>
<td>Writing Skills</td>
<td>Analytical and Critical Thinking Skills</td>
<td>Research Methodology Skills</td>
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<td>Basic Business/Working Knowledge Skills</td>
<td>International Orientation</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIS4010</td>
<td>Historiske grunnlagsproblemer: teori og historiografi</td>
<td>Lectures</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIS4020</td>
<td>Historisk metodologi</td>
<td>Lectures and discussions</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>No separate assessment, but obligatory activities and participation are included in the course credit</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIS4030</td>
<td>Oppgaveseminar I</td>
<td>Lectures and seminar</td>
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<td>Research project and mandatory participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIS4040</td>
<td>Oppgaveseminar II</td>
<td>Lectures and seminar</td>
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<td>HIS4110</td>
<td>Realhistorisk lesemne</td>
<td>A self-study course, with the teaching of various topics can follow. Research seminars can be a mixture of curriculum review and discussion of draft dissertations. This reading course may be related to the thesis.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIS4090</td>
<td>Masteroppgave i historie</td>
<td>The topic is chosen in consultation with a teacher and must be approved by it. Thesis is an individual work.</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Master thesis between 70 and 120 pages. The thesis can be written in Norwegian or English. The final grade is determined after the oral examination.</td>
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<td>Course ID</td>
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<td>Oral communication and/or presentation skills</td>
<td>Writing skills</td>
<td>Analytical and critical thinking skills</td>
<td>Research methodology skills</td>
<td>Network working (team work) / discussions</td>
<td>Group work</td>
<td>Basic business/working knowledge skills</td>
<td>International orientation</td>
<td>Exam/Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>ENG4107</td>
<td>Corpora in Language Research: Theory and method</td>
<td>Lectures with problem-oriented exercises</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>Oral presentation of an essay which is part of or in connection with the reading-list oral presentation at the seminar</td>
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<tr>
<td>LING4140</td>
<td>Språkvitenskapelig metode (Language Research Method)</td>
<td>Lectures and seminar</td>
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<td>Description of master thesis 3-day paper</td>
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<td>LING4101</td>
<td>Språkvitenskapelige vitenskapsteori</td>
<td>Lectures and seminar</td>
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<td>3-day written paper final exam. The two compulsory assignments must be approved before.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ENG4156</td>
<td>History of the English Language</td>
<td>Lectures</td>
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<td>One qualifying paper of 5 standard pages; The exam - term paper of 10 pages</td>
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<tr>
<td>ENG4163</td>
<td>Global English</td>
<td>Lectures, problem-oriented exercises</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>One obligatory paper (5 standard pages)</td>
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<tr>
<td>EDID4010</td>
<td>Fundamental concepts of teaching English as a Foreign Language</td>
<td>Lectures and student presentations</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<td>Paper (3000 - 4000 word). The paper is presented for discussion in the group. A fellow student reads the preliminary paper and comments / reviews paper and presentation.</td>
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</table>